



Artist Residencies and their Contribution to the Journey of Artistic Expression

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ABSTRACT

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Artist Residencies and Their Contribution to the Journey of Artistic Expression

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The objective of this thesis was to examine the role of artist residencies and their contribution to the journey of artistic expression. The data were gathered by collecting information found in articles, publications, online sources and books. During the research, more attention has been paid to the attributions of artists throughout history brought by their need to travel in search of inspiration, experiment with mediums, collaborate with other artists, explore new cultures and exchange ideas. The data were analysed by applying the results of the expansion and diversification of artist-in-residence programs as we know them today.

The artistic part of the thesis titled Winter Harvest - a mixed-media project consisting of four oil paintings, a video and a textile installation, was implemented as a case study to further analyse how the change of the environment and the introduction to a new culture affect the working process and inner state of an artist. The site-specific series of artworks were created in the course of the artist's residence in Finland during winter of 2022-2023. The final project was exhibited in the Degree Show Raw of the Fine Art study path at Gallery Himmelblau in March 2023.

The findings of this thesis clarify the significantly beneficial result an artist can receive by applying and participating in an artist-in-residence program throughout their artistic journey. Specifically, they indicate the significant possibilities of artist-in-residence programs located in Finland. The findings can be used as an instructive source for upcoming artists who are interested in having further information and participating in an artist-in-residence program during their artistic career.

Key words: artist-in-residence, diversification, site-specific

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1 INTRODUCTION

The ever-increasing artist-in-residence programs in the art world, has been beneficial for participating artists by providing them with time, space and resources to create new projects, develop their skills and connect with new audiences. These programs typically offer artists opportunities to work in new environments, free from daily distractions and the possibility to collaborate with other artists and creative professionals.

Artist-in-residence programs have been around for centuries, although the formalisation of these programs is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the 19th and early 20th century, wealthy patrons would often invite artists to live and work in their homes or estates, by providing them with the resources and support they needed to create new work. However, it wasn't until the 1960s that the first formal artist-in-residence programs were established.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the impact and benefits of artist-in-residence programs in the creative journey of an artist. By analysing their role and opportunity to provide artists with a supportive and nurturing environment, it is found that exciting new directions in their work help them develop their skills and connections that can lead to career growth and creative collaborations in the long term.

The main objective of this study was to gather information about artist-in-residence programs in Finland and to analyse the impact and benefits that they have on artistic careers. It was found that Finland has a long-standing tradition of supporting arts and culture through public funding. The Finnish government provides generous grants, subsidies and stipends for artists, cultural organisations and events, making Finland a supportive environment for the artists. By promoting cultural exchange, creativity and community engagement, the artist-in-residence programs in Finland are attracting local and international artists that are beneficial to local businesses, tourism and play an important role in boosting the local economy as well.

In this thesis *Winter Harvest*, a visual diary that consists of a painting series, a video art and a textile installation, was used to further analyse the benefits and artistic growth that living in Finland can bring. By diving deeper into the research of artist-in-residence programs, I was inspired to create a site-specific and time-specific project in the form of a visual journal that tells a subjective story about my environment in connection to my inner state during the time of the process.

Specifically, my aim was to capture the essence of winter in Finland, while also incorporating elements of my Albanian heritage. This fusion of cultural influences allowed me to highlight the similarities and differences between these two countries through my personal lens. The artworks in the series were

exhibited at Gallery Himmelblau in Tampere, Finland, in March 2023, as part of the Fine Arts Degree Show RAW.

The mixed-media approach in creating the series allowed for a variety of textures and techniques to be incorporated into the artworks, resulting in a visually striking collection. The use of different materials, such as paint, textile, video and installation, added depth and dimension to each piece, while also contributing to the overall theme of winter in Finland. Overall, Winter Harvest is a testament to my ability to fuse cultural influences and personal experiences to create a unique and visually captivating body of work. The series serves as a reminder of the power of art to bridge cultural differences and bring people together through shared experiences.

2 BRIEF HISTORY OF ARTIST RESIDENCIES

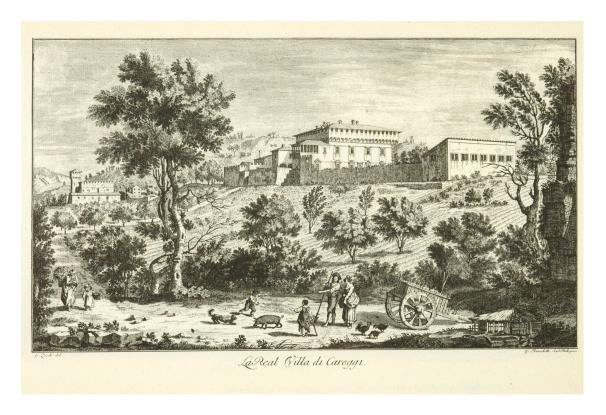
Artist residencies or artist-in-residence programs were established to provide artists and other creatives a break from their usual surroundings and obligations. They allow residents to have time and space for reflection by developing new ideas, focusing on their research, experimenting and producing new works of art. Furthermore, they can give individuals the opportunity to expand their practice within another environment. By meeting fellow artists, learning new skills, and spending time in a fascinating new location, residencies broaden cultural awareness, ignite multi-layered exchange, and let participants become immersed into another setting. (Wendy Network 2021).

Artist-in-residence programs are mainly aimed at young artists who are willing to expand their artistic development and use the residency as an opportunity to develop new ideas, test new methods, techniques and do research. These opportunities can end up having a long term impact on their life and work. The participant artists in residency programs contribute on a large scale to cultural diversity by giving insights into their cultural background through their artistic process during the stay. Artist residencies typically are funded and they offer a living and working space, production support, stipend and other facilities. Other times the artists must pay the costs of the residency program themselves.

Throughout history, artist in-residence programs have played an important role in the cultural and art landscape by being valid opportunities for a professional artist's career. Residency programs in the past, took place exclusively in an art context. In today's art world, they can now be found in technology, science, business and educational programs. In addition, many towns and regions have artists residency programs as part of their arts and cultural strategies. Furthermore, there is almost an artist residency industry where brokers put together artists and organisations, such as *Residency Unlimited* and *Res Artists*, where government bodies provide residency programs as part of their creative industries strategies. (Lehman 2017, p. 9).

The idea of Artist Residencies, where artists withdraw from society to solely focus on ideas and work on projects, dates back to the late 16th century. The concept of patronage was firstly introduced during the Italian Renaissance, where families that assembled wealth and power would financially support the artist's work by becoming their patrons. Some of the most famous and familiar Renaissance works, such as Di Vinci's The Last Supper, were created as the result of patronage. (Artshare 2021)

Villa Careggi, the residency were the Medicis, lords of Florence and great patrons of the art, culture and knowledge, encouraged the activation of practices and methods that could be called proto-residencies: in this place, five or six centuries ago, Cosimo de' Medici gave life to the Napoleonic Academy, donating to people like Marsilio Ficino, Poliziano, Pico della Mirandola homes and workplaces to encourage meetings, collaborations, new research paths or more simply moments of withdrawal and relaxation from the ferment of everyday life in Florence. (Ferraresi 2019, p.2)



PICTURE 1. Careggi Villa in Florence, 15th Century. (Residency Unlimited)

In the late 19th and 20th century, a time when the industrial revolution was at its peak, many artists settled in the countryside by forming the first artist-in-residence programs. Artists were looking for quiet spaces to create, as an escape from the urban chaos. During that time, wealthy patrons in the United Kingdom and United States advocated the support of artists by offering them free workspaces. Concurrently, in other parts of Europe, artists formed communities and collectively settled in the countryside with goals in pursuing their artistic ideas and careers. According to an article made by Art Share, Worpswede, an artist colony outside Bremen, housed artists Heinrich Vofeler and Rainer Maria Rilke and was known as "Wesdorf" or a world village. Worpswede, now known as Künstlerhäuser Worpswede, is still open today. (Artshare 2021)

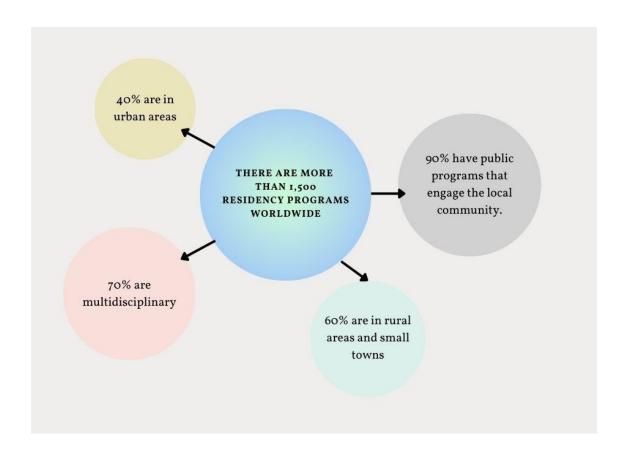
A new type of artist-in-residence program emerged in the 1960s, which initiated opportunities for the artists to temporarily withdraw from a society that was regarded as bourgeois. Once again, artists fled to the countryside seeking retreat and an utopian environment. Unhappy with the bourgeois society and ready for radical change, many artists highlighted social and political action within their works, characterising this residency period to be activist. (Artshare 2021) Some artists chose to stay in urban areas and cities and work in a public and inclusive society, such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring and others. During the 1990s, the phenomenon of globalisation increased the diversity of artist residencies with their expansion beyond the traditional western art world. For the first time, residential art centres were now creating alternative knowledge for culture and exchange within a local and global scale.

Within the rise of the Internet in the 2000s, residencies became more accessible and popular that led to a stronger competition in response to their demand. Thanks to more suitable ways of travelling and to more efficient forms of communication, artists now had the opportunity to benefit in greater ways by becoming part of residencies and connecting with other creatives all over the globe. (Transartists 2018) Artist-in-residence programs have evolved significantly since 2010 by increasing diversity and inclusivity. They are becoming more and more intrinsic to artistic careers by continuing to provide opportunities and support for creatives worldwide. Many programs have broadened their eligibility criteria to include unrepresented artists that come from a diverse cultural background and marginalised communities. Moreover, artist residencies have become more competitive with the result of requiring the applicants to go through a challenging application that demands a rising standard of quality. (Artshare 2021)

Artist-in-residence programs are now shifting their focus on social impact and community engagement. They encourage artists to work on projects that have a positive impact on society such as addressing social issues and environmental sustainability. Specifically, a greater emphasis is placed on submissions from applicants addressing climate and environmental issues where artists are encouraged to engage with local ecosystems and work with recycled materials. Moreover, this approach is leading to more interdisciplinary collaborations between artists and other professionals such as scientists, engineers and designers with the result of new and exciting projects that bridge the gap between art and science. According to an article found on the Transartists website, artist-in-residence programmes were focused on their means of existence, their models and ways of operating for a very long time. It was the artist to provide, as it were, the residency with content. Now the interest in how seems to shift to an interest in what, and this shift can be discerned among the hosts as well as the guests. (Transartists 2019) In addition, artist residencies nowadays have become more inclusive, socially conscious and collaborative, embracing new technologies and ideas to support artists and promote creativity on a larger scale.

3 TYPES OF ARTIST RESIDENCIES

There is a wide spectrum of different types of residencies. While some are part of larger institutions, smaller operations exist solely to facilitate artist exchange programs. Some are connected to museums, galleries, studio spaces, artist-run-centres, theatres, schools and universities, festivals, and even governmental offices. They are found in urban settings, rural and remote locations, national parks and online frameworks. They can be seasonal, ongoing, or part of a special event. Some are faculty-led and follow themed topics. Many residencies include trips, group critiques, and guest lecturers. Or, they can be community-involved; giving presentations, workshops, or collaborating with local citizens. Most artist residencies accommodate both alone time and critical but informal discourse with fellow residents. (Wendy Network 2021)



PICTURE 2. Study on types of residency programs according to the Artists Communities Alliance.

The 'Classic Residency', is one of the most common types of residency models, a program that provides studio space for the artists to develop new work. Throughout the world and in Europe governments and funds invest in residency institutions. These organisations often have well-established and strong reputations in the arts world. (European Commission 2014, p.17) The focus of the classic residency models is on the artists' personal development along with the development of artwork during the residency. These types of residency programs attract visits from curators, collectors and art critics making the program a welcoming space for creative encounter and artistic exchange.

Another residency model is the 'Artist-led Residency' program which is often organised by professionals in the art world that help in the development of a profile based on the priorities of the founder. These residencies can be small-scale programs run by artists themselves or programs linked to larger-scale such as the local art scene. Artist-led residencies have a very clear profile and their focus is based on a specific network or art district, according to the priorities and personality of the founders.

'Research-based Residency' is a residency model where the process and exploration of research is the main goal. A research residency often encourages new ideas, research and experimentation rather than making artwork or producing an exhibition. This type of program usually does not include a studio for the artist resident. Research-based residencies revolve around peer-to-peer exchange, internationally organised and focused on topics of importance to hosts and guests. (Transartists 2019)

'Interdisciplinary and Cross-Sectorial Residencies' are residency programs aimed at creatives working with a diversity of mediums, in divergent directions and art fields. This type of residency program is beneficial for both the hosts and the artists participants because of its tendency to explore the opportunities created in collaboration with partners outside of the residency and the arts world.

Lastly, another type of artist residencies are 'Virtual Residencies'. These programs are beneficial in many ways and aim to stimulate institutional support, increase accessibility and visibility for artists. Sometimes, they even provide funding. The advantages of doing a virtual residency for the artists is immobility and trouble leaving home for an extended time because of family reasons, visa issues and other reasons. Through virtual residencies , the audience can interact with the creative process, project or artwork regardless of physical or geographical limitations. The global pandemic back in 2020, made artist-in-residence programmes across the world rethink their ways and adapt quickly in the current situation, in order to survive. With restricted or zero mobility, artists and creatives have been unable to travel and have felt an increasing sense of isolation. In response, several existing art residencies have transformed to online residencies. (ASEF culture360 2021)





PICTURE 3. Alicia Gonzalez at L'AiR Arts, Research-based Residency. Paris, France. (Photo by Teuta Pashnjari 2022)

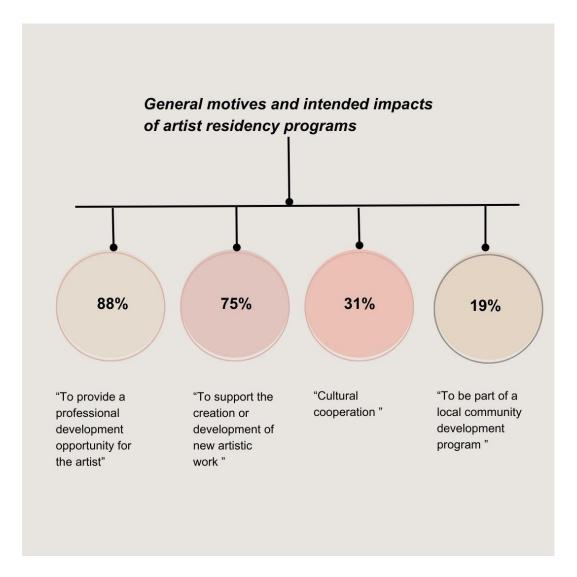
4 THE ROLE OF ARTIST RESIDENCIES IN AN ARTISTIC JOURNEY

Over the past few years, there has been an expansion in the variety of residency programs and an increasing importance regarding their role in the career of artists. There are many artists who just graduated and choose to participate in residencies because they view these programs as a first step into their professional artistic journey, whilst established artists use residencies as a mid-career break and spaces for creative retreat. Another reason why artists choose residencies is to focus on their development by distancing themselves from their secondary activities, usually non-related art jobs, but also extract themselves from their usual environment, a great opportunity to shift their focus back to artistic creation. A few residencies provide living costs for artist participants, whilst others might cover only studio space and/or accommodation.

Residencies encourage artists to create new projects, on site, collect, research and open up to new points of view. This immersive experience plays an important role in public and professional awareness within the local and global contemporary art scene. It reinforces the concept of artists' residencies as cells of knowledge and alternative academies. Artists nowadays design their own processes, doing location-based research that may resemble a residency. For this kind of process, the artist does not rely on existing structures.

The preferred time frame for participating in artist-in-residence programs varies between art forms and artists. For example visual artists tend to be interested in longer term residencies whilst artists working in art forms that require a collective or collaboration, usually prefer shorter periods of residency programs. Whereas 6-12 month residencies were more common before, nowadays artists' residencies are more likely to be for 3 months, 6 weeks, down to pop up, one day residencies. This reflects current economic realities and, in the case of international artists, the fact that immigration/visa rules allow no more than a 3 month period of temporary stay in one EU country. (Council Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014).

In September 2013, IFACCA gathered information on artist residencies that made possible responses to the survey from 18 countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Cook Is, Cuba, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, NZ, Scotland, Singapore, Tunisia, United States, Zambia, and Zimbabwe – covering all continents. Respondents were given a list of possible reasons for supporting residencies, and were asked to choose which they felt applied to their organisation. The responses were as follows: To provide a professional development opportunity for the artist (88%) To support the creation or development of new artistic work (75%) Cultural cooperation (31%) To be part of a local community development program (19%). (IFACCA 2013)



PICTURE 4. Survey by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), 2013.

4.1 Benefits of artist residencies

New settings seem to force rapid creativity. In 1967, composer John Cage and dance pioneer Merce Cunningham spent much of their time at Skowhegan mushroom hunting; Cage had been invited to meet with students as a visiting artist, and his creative and romantic partner Cunningham tagged along. But when Cage saw posters around town announcing that he was giving a performance—something he wasn't aware of at the time, he had to think fast. And so he composed his now-famous work "Variations VII" in a single evening. "You have to improvise," says Workneh. "That's part of what it means to create in a reduced setting. You don't have your normal tool kit." Cage and Cunningham were visiting dignitaries at that point, and the primary thrust of residencies is more for artists who are in earlier stages of their careers. (L'Officiel USA 2020).









PICTURE 5. Skowhegan Residency (L'Officiel USA)

The average age of Skowhegan participants is 28, says the artist Kiki Smith, a board member of the institution, whose father, the late Tony Smith, also lectured there. "They are people out of grad school, out on their own, and they need other colleagues," she says. "It's a transformative time—you got a lot of attention in school, and now you need more." Personal breakthroughs can also occur during a few summer months, when romance blooms among creative types who are put together in a hothouse atmosphere. (L'Officiel USA 2020)

Artists are constantly striving for vital ways to strengthen their creative horizon and connections. Artist-in-residence programs are essential for creatives who want to reach their full potential and expand their innovative skills. The art world is very competitive, therefore, considering a residency program will benefit greatly for the artist. According to research and sources, there are many reasons why artist-in-residence programs are favourable, specifically for young emerging artists who are in their start of their career but not exclusively:

A learning experience

Artist residencies are programs with learning possibilities that involve many feedback sessions between artists, curators and professionals with the result of growth and of gaining specific skills and techniques. Moreover, resident artists can benefit from exposure to emerging art forms that can help in enriching their artistic practice in the long term. By applying and participating in an artist-in-residence program, artists participants have the possibility to learn and work in a new environment, which can be beneficial by allowing space for new ideas and experimentation.

A new environment

Oftentimes, artists are limited by their home environment and studio space as a consequence of struggling to find new sources of inspiration and ideas. Daily life can often limit artistic ability and focus, therefore the time to dedicate oneself to the production of a project is not sufficient. By refining their residency search, the artist can apply to their residency environment of preference. Additionally, the chance to work in a new location can open artists up to new techniques, materials, and styles that they may not have had the opportunity to explore in their usual environment. Oftentimes, artists return from an artist-in-residence program feeling rejuvenated and inspired, with a renewed sense of purpose and direction. For many artists, the experience of an art residency is one that they will never forget, and one that will continue to impact their work for years to come. (BrushBio 2022)

Creative experimentation

Artist-in-residence programs are opportunities for personal growth and experimentation outside of one's comfort zone. Travelling to a new place and working in a new environment can add perspective that feeds the artist's creativity and allows space for experimentation at work. It is important for the artists to constantly challenge themselves in ways that are elevating and reaffirming, based on where they are working. Within the space of creative experimentation, there is a result of a body of work that is produced during the program. It can be an individual project, a commission, a performance or a body of work that responds to a particular issue or theme.

Connecting with an audience

Artist residencies provide artist participants the possibility to expose their final artwork to a larger audience. As an artist in residence, there will be many opportunities for establishing a relationship with other creative people by participating in group exhibitions, workshops, talks or other social events. Additionally, residencies provide artists a platform of constructive feedback from professionals, curators, gallerists who are constantly looking for new emerging artists to collaborate with. The probability of learning and growing in a supportive environment is critical and rarely available in the professional world outside of creative programs and occasions.

Economic support

Successful artist residency programs who attract funding from outside organisations such as city art councils, foundations and other charitable resources that provide financial and career opportunities for individual artists. These residencies are beneficial for artists to not think about the financial obligations since they cover expenses such as living and working costs, materials, production costs, equipment and hiring employees. By not worrying about the economical aspect of the program, the artist's emotional and mental focus is fully directed onto their art practice during the time of the residency.



PICTURE 6. The Chinati Foundation/La Fundación Chinati (Wikipedia Image)

4.2 Finding a suitable artist-in-residence program

Finding the right artist-in-residence program can be a difficult and time-consuming task. Despite the fact that there are multiple search engines that take you directly to residency programs, most of them are not comprehensive nor updated manually. It can be quite challenging for the artists to narrow down a selection of preferred residencies when faced with disorganisation and a plethora of information.

While residency programs vary in scope and substance, artist's much research with the right mindset in order to find the most suitable ones to apply to. Artist residencies are experiences that welcome growth, discovery and knowledge and they should be seen as part of the artistic journey that can involve many things not only career advancement.

According to an article in Artsy, three young art professionals created *The Rivet*, a web-based platform that will help facilitate artist residencies research. The platform's co-founders, Katrina Neumann, Sebastien Sanz de Santamaria and Kira Simon-Kennedy, have founded a few of the most important platforms that evolve around artist residencies. In 2013, Katrina Neumann founded *Rate My Artist Residency*, in 2009, Sebastien Sanz de Santamaria co-founded *Residency Unlimited* and in 2013, Kira Simon-Kennedy co-founded *China Residencies*. (Artsy 2017). According to online resources and research, there are many types of residency programs that offer different benefits for the selected artists. Before applying, there are a few steps an artist needs to take in order to find a suitable artist-in-residence program.

Research

The most important consideration an artist has to take when looking for a residency, is finding the right match. This is a crucial and time-consuming process but going through the programs website and looking at the artists they selected previously, is important. According to an article on Artsy about finding a suitable artist residency, a good start is to find the website and background information of an artist who has previously participated in a residency program and ask the following questions; What was the first thing they did? If they're a visual artist, what galleries or spaces showed their work first? If they're a filmmaker or writer, what festivals featured their work? (Artsy 2017) It is crucial to dive deeper into research before applying for a residency program.

Choosing the right program

There are many different types of residency programs, so before applying the artist must be aware of what kind of resources, network, exposure, creative space or support the program provides. By doing research on past participants, the artist might find interviews or any type of helpful information concerning the residency. By asking questions that evolve around the subject of time, needs, language skills or comfort levels, the artist has a clearer perspective whether or

not a residency is the right program for them. Another important factor is making sure one is qualified for the program beforehand which saves a lot of time and effort when applying. There are residencies which, depending on the program, might ask for a part-time or full-time presence. Moreover, it is good to check if the residency requires submission fees, participation fees, if they cover living and working expenses, travel, food or materials.

Deadline and application

After finding the right residency opportunity, it is practical to remember the deadline and start preparing the residency application and documents. Residency programs differ from one another but they all have unique application instructions and requirements that must be followed and respected when applying for a program. An incisive, clear and interesting application will make an artist stand out. By remembering and keeping in mind that the readers and curators might be looking at hundreds of proposals, avoidance of repetition and vagueness will make an application for a residency program interesting and considerable.



PICTURE 7. Carina Chang at GlogauAiR gGmbH, Artist Residency. Berlin, Germany. (Photo by Teuta Pashnjari 2022)

5 ARTIST RESIDENCIES IN FINLAND

Finland is home to many world-renowned artist residencies that attract creatives from all over the world. Each one of the artist-in-residence programs in Finland has their own unique focus and requirements and can be a beneficial opportunity for the artist participants to fully get involved with creative projects in a supportive, friendly and artistic environment.

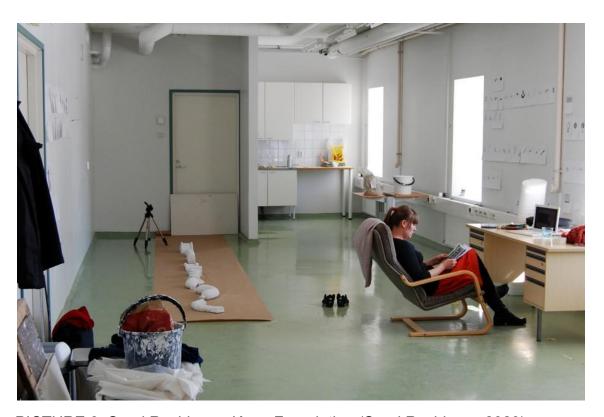
Artist-in-residence programs in Finland have a history that dates back to the early 20th century. The first known residency program in Finland was established in 1907 at the Ateneum Art Museum in Helsinki, where artists were invited to live and work on site for a short period of time. In the 1960s, the Finnish government started to promote international cultural exchange through artist-in-residence programs. The Finnish Artists' Studio Foundation (Suomen Taiteilijaseuran Atelieesäätiö) was established in 1990 with the goal of providing working and living spaces for artists from Finland and other countries. In the 1970s, several other residency programs were established in Finland, including the Nordic Artists' Centre in Dale, Norway, which was founded in 1978 with the participation of Finland. In the 1980s and 1990s, the number of artist-in-residence programs continued to grow, with many municipalities and organisations establishing their own programs. They offered residencies for visual artists, writers, filmmakers, and other creative professionals, and were often located in rural areas or other natural settings. The concept of Artist Residencies became more familiar during the mid-20s. In 1996, the Arts Council of Finland established a residency program that aimed to form international artistic exchange and collaboration.

Today, Finland has a thriving network of artist-in-residence programs, with over 50 programs located throughout the country. These programs offer a wide range of opportunities for artists and creative professionals, and are an important part of Finland's cultural landscape. The artist-in-residence scene is rich with programs offered by a wide range of organisations, including museums, universities, and artist associations. The Finnish Artists' Studio Foundation continues to be a major player in the field, providing residencies for both Finnish and international artists at several locations throughout the country. The programs offer artists the opportunity to work in a supportive environment, connect with other artists, and gain exposure to new ideas and perspectives.

Arteles Creative Centre is a residency program and centre located in the middle of the extraordinary nature of Hämeenkyrö (European Union Landscape Award in 2009), far from city life distractions. The program offers artists, writers, designers, and other creatives a unique opportunity for accommodation and workspace in a supportive and inspiring environment. (Arteles Creative Centre 2023) The centre provides various residency programs for different disciplines and lengths of stay, ranging from 2 to 12 weeks. It also offers workshops,

exhibitions, and events for artists and the local community. Arteles aims to provide a quiet and peaceful environment that encourages experimentation, collaboration, and creative growth. The facilities include private and shared studios, accommodation, a sauna, a wood-burning hot tub, and a communal kitchen. It welcomes artists from all over the world and has hosted over 2,500 residents from more than 90 countries since its inception in 2010.

The Saari Residence, maintained by Kone Foundation, is a residence located in Mynämäki, Southwest Finland. The Residency provides living and working space for artists and researchers from various fields, including visual arts, literature, music, dance, and various academic disciplines. Participants are provided with a studio or workspace, accommodation, and a stipend to cover living expenses. The residency is open to both Finnish and international applicants, and participants are selected through a competitive application process. At the Saari Residence, artists and researchers can focus on their work in a peaceful rural environment but also share ideas, dialogue and collaboration among its participants. (Kulttuuria Kaikille 2023) The Saari Residence is highly regarded as a prestigious residency program because of its idyllic location, diverse community of artists, many opportunities for networking and has hosted many renowned artists and researchers over the years.



PICTURE 8. Saari Residency, Kone Foundation (Saari Residency 2023)

The Mustarinda Association is a Finnish non-profit organisation founded in 2009. Its aim is to promote ecological, cultural, and societal sustainability in Finland and globally. The association is based in the Mustarinda House, which is a former forestry station located in the middle of a nature reserve in the Kainuu region of Finland. At the centre of their activity lie contemporary art, boundary-crossing research, practical experimentation, communication, education and events. (Culture 360 2021) The association also publishes a journal called "Mustarinda" that features articles, essays, and artwork related to sustainability and ecology. The Mustarinda House is itself a sustainable building, featuring a range of eco-friendly technologies such as solar panels, a wind turbine, and a biogas plant. The house is also used as a community centre and a venue for cultural events. Participants in the program have access to shared workspaces, a library, sauna and outdoor spaces for reflection and exploration.

The Helsinki International Artist Programme (HIAP) is a residency program that is located in the heart of Helsinki and was established in 1998. It offers residencies to artists from all over the world, and it is particularly focused on supporting contemporary art and cultural exchange. The HIAP Residency program provides artists with accommodation, workspace, and a stipend to cover living expenses during their stay in Helsinki. The residency also offers support in terms of networking, project management, and production assistance. The program is open to artists from all disciplines, including visual arts, performing arts, literature, and research-based practices. The residency duration can range from one to six months, depending on the needs of the artist and the availability of space. To apply for the HIAP Residency program, artists need to submit a proposal outlining their project or research plan, along with a portfolio of their previous work. The application process is competitive, and the selection is made by a panel of international art professionals. (HIAP 2023)



PICTURE 9. HIAP Residency. Helsinki, Finland (Uni Arts 2023)

5.1 Benefits of doing a residency in Finland

Finland has a thriving arts and culture scene, with numerous galleries, museums, exhibitions and events that showcase the works of both local and international artists. This provides an amazing opportunity for an artist to immerse themselves in a creative community with the result of collaboration and learning. Finland is known for its stunning natural beauty that has inspired many artists throughout history. It has a landscape filled with vast forests, lakes and mesmerising coastline. There are many reasons why Finland is an excellent destination that provides many potential benefits of participating in an artist-in-residence program.

Exposure to a new cultural environment

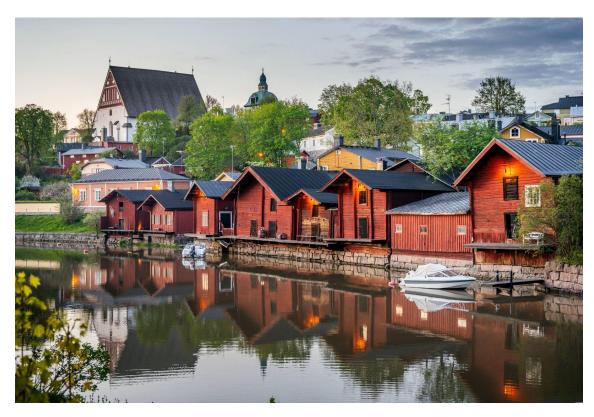
Participating in a residency program in Finland is beneficial due to the wide opportunities for the artists to submerge in a new and interesting cultural environment, which can be a source of inspiration and creative stimulation for the artist participants. Moreover, residencies provide exploration of Finnish culture and society. Finland consistently ranks as one of the happiest and most livable countries in the world because of the high quality of living conditions. This particularly is beneficial for artists who need a supportive, calm, safe and stable environment in order to create.

Access to resources and support

Many artist-in-residence programs provide participants with access to resources and support that can help them further with their artistic practice. This may include affordable or even free studio space, equipment, materials needed for projects during the time of the residency and other forms of support that the artist must need. This can be a valuable opportunity to experiment, take risks and push the creative boundaries. Moreover, participating in an artist-in-residence program in Finland, can provide opportunities to meet and connect with other artists, curators, collectors and art professionals from around the world. Finland has a reputation as a hub for contemporary art that can help to increase visibility and new audiences.

Funding

Artist-in-residence programs in Finland can provide significant benefits to artists by offering them a unique opportunity to focus on their creative work. Funding for residencies is essential in ensuring that they can continue to offer these opportunities to artists from all over the world. Without funding, residencies may not be able to provide necessary resources with the result of limiting the impact of the program on the artist's work and career. Moreover, funding for artist-in-residence programs in Finland plays a crucial role, and can help to promote cultural exchange, as artists from different backgrounds come together to share their experiences and collaborate. By providing a supportive environment with funds and grants, residencies contribute to the growth and development of the cultural life of the country.



PICTURE 10. Fiskars village, Finland. Home to more than 200 artists. Credits: Niko Laurila

6 WINTER HARVEST

Winter Harvest is a visual journal that aims to explore my relationship with the natural environment in the course of winter in Finland. The project consists of four mixed-media oil paintings (100 x 120 cm), a one-screen video art installation (04 min 02 sec) and a sheer textile installation (12 m). The site-specific and time-specific series of artworks were created in Tampere between November 2022 and March 2023 and were exhibited in the Degree Show Raw of the Fine Art study path at Gallery Himmelblau in March 2023.



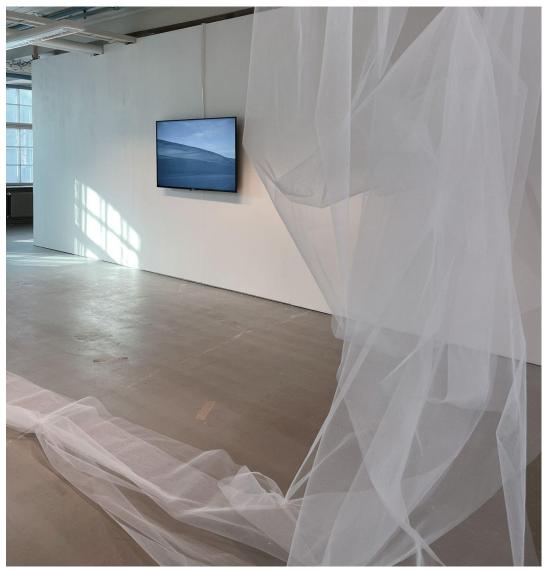
PICTURE 11. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest (2023), Installation view. Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere. (DeZonne 2023)

In Winter Harvest, the artworks depict self-portraits challenged by different time frames where the past, the present and the future are connected. The purpose of using the self in the context in which the artworks were created, is a form of self-expression and an act of self-exploration of my own identity, emotions and experiences throughout my journey of living and studying in Finland.

The title of the project *Winter Harvest* refers to the practice of collecting crops during the colder months of the year when they have reached maturity. Winter harvesting is typically done for crops that can withstand freezing temperatures

and may even benefit from exposure to colder temperatures such as root vegetables. Because winter-harvested crops can often be grown closer to where they will be consumed, they may be fresher and more flavorful than produce that has been shipped from other regions.

In the series, the action of harvesting in the winter is approached with symbolism and visual imagery that embodies the personification of mundane routines such as sleeping, cooking, eating and cleaning. The classic neutral colour palette of the landscape reminds that of a cold and long winter in Finland whereas the figures of women dressed in Albanian traditional clothing represent a Southern Albanian culture and symbolise my frame of mind towards my surroundings during the time of the creation of the project.



PICTURE 12. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest (2023), Installation view. Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere. (Teuta Pashnjari 2023)

6.1 Background. How my Residency in Finland inspired the project

Growing up in Tapize, Albania led me to develop a higher sense of imagination and curiosity from a very young age due to the nature of my environment which was somehow isolated, rural, picturesque, traditional and had a sense of community. My introduction to reading adventurous and fascinating books led to dreaming of exploring cultures and living in other countries when I am older.

My father, a working immigrant in Corfu island, Greece, used to visit home in Tapize a few times per year and one of the earliest memories I have from my childhood are his line drawings and pencil sketches that he used to draw in front of me. I was so mesmerised by the idea that one can construct visual symbols and meanings with the use of three simple mediums such as a pencil, paper and a human hand. By virtue of my father, I started sketching too.

At the age of thirteen, my mother and my brothers moved to Corfu island in Greece so we could live together with my father. For the first time, I was introduced to a new culture, a new language and a completely different environment. Unable to fit in and in search of escapism, I started painting. I went outdoors and started Plein air paintings of green olive trees, the turquoise seascape and its blue horizon. It was during those meditative moments of landscape studies that I became aware of the colours, shapes, forms and different objects in my surroundings. There is a quote by Claude Monet that perfectly describes my emotional state at those precious moments; "What keeps my heart awake is colourful silence."



PICTURE 13. Teuta Pashnjari, Corfu Island (2015). Gouache colour studies on paper of Corfiot landscape, 30x30 cm.

After 12 years of living in Corfu, I knew I was ready to live abroad because even though I still admired the beauty and uniqueness of my surroundings, I did not feel motivated to paint nor could find inspiration for new projects. I felt trapped and unable to come up with new ideas that led to frustration and self-doubt. It was at those moments of anticipation when I became aware of the fact that the environment can have an impact on an artistic journey that can either be beneficial or can lead to creative blocks.

In 2019, I made the decision to move to Finland to pursue my fine art studies at TAMK. The sudden change of my environment and the natural differences between Southern and Northern Europe questioned my artistic process. Throughout the journey and learning process of my art studies, I was introduced to new art mediums I was unfamiliar with that led to beneficial aspects and artistic freedom when it comes to experimentation and in finding my own creative voice. Moreover, I became familiar with the terms site-specific and time-specific that later on became crucial factors when it comes to creating a new body of work and dive deeper into a more philosophical aspect of the process of art making.

Diving into the exploration of my environment and how it affects my artistic process, I came to discover that colour is a key factor that helps in defining the subject matter and storytelling in my work. Through continuous practical and experimental research I came to realise that another important subject is the use of autobiographical figurative art combined with a surreal environment. Inspired by the beauty of the Finnish landscape, specifically during winter, my projects became site-specific and influenced by my location.



PICTURE 14, 15. Teuta Pashnjari: Join us and Sunset in Corfu Island, Acrylic on board, 2019. The first paintings I made in Finland, still influenced by Southern colours.

6.2 Paintings

Winter Harvest consists of a series of four mixed-media oil paintings ($100 \times 120 \text{ cm}$) that aim to represent my perspective on the Finnish landscape, as seen from my Southern European background. The paintings started in November 2022 and were finished in March 2023. Through the mixing of colours, experimenting with textiles and seeing the body of artworks come to life, I learned how to have a clearer observation of my environment, in this case, the Finnish landscape during winter.

Painting is an art form that has encouraged me over the years to think outside of the box. It is a relaxing activity that reduces stress and anxiety, allowing space for inner presence and self-reflection. By developing a better understanding of colour, composition and light, I have been able to have the freedom of expressing my thoughts and emotions through my projects. Painting provides an outlet for conveying my innermost feelings in a visual form.

Before starting the series, I did additional research on Finnish painters who worked with themes that represent Finland and its cultural aspects. I came across paintings from Aleksi Gallen-Kallela and Magnus Enckell that fueled my inspiration and guided my vision of how Finnish painters saw their landscape. I was mainly interested in the way they used colour and light within the paintings, important details that are required when analysing the narrative and the painter's state of mind.

In addition to my personal reflection of Finnish winter combined with research by observing Finnish painters, I came to the conclusion that due to its snow-covered landscapes, the shades of white and blue dominate the winter season in Finland. Overall, the colours are heavily influenced by nature, with emerald greens, sapphire blues and crisp whites dominating much of the landscape. With that in mind, I started sketching the painting series Winter Harvest.

Surrealism is an art movement heavily influenced by the ideas of psychoanalysis and the concept of the unconscious mind. By implementing the use of surrealism in the Winter Harvest painting series, I had the freedom to depict dreamlike and bizarre imagery that challenges artistic norms and the viewer's perception regarding the subject matter. The use of surrealism allowed space for discussing and reflecting on the narrative of the paintings as a result of analysing my inner condition during winter months in Finland that are similar to a dream state and an uncanny feeling when surrounded with snow.



PICTURE 16. *Lake Keitele*, Aleksi Gallen-Kallela (1865-1931) The National Gallery, London.



PICTURE 17. Magnus Enckell, *Melankolia*, 1895, Oil on canvas, 99 x 155 cm. Collection of Satakunta Museum, Pori, Finland.



PICTURE 18. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest I (2023), Exhibition view. Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere. (Teuta Pashnjari 2023)

The first artwork I started titled *Winter Harvest I*, depicts a self-portrait placed in a surreal winter environment. In the foreground, a grey bathtub is depicted which symbolises cleansing and purity. The woman's figure is doing the laundry by carefully placing the clean textiles on the rope for drying. The main character of the painting is surrounded by two trees covered in snowflakes, shaped in the form of human lungs, symbolising life and inhalation. The deep blues on the foreground and pink hues of the winter sky contrast beautifully with the pristine white snow, creating a striking colour palette that reminds that of a melancholic yet peaceful memory of the past.

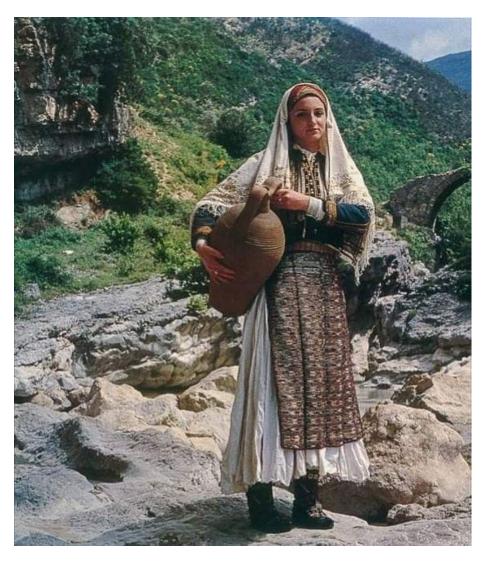
The red apples are a repetitive symbolism in the painting series but also in the video art that aim to represent love, life and the pursuit of beauty and desire. In this context, the apples specifically symbolise the beauty of winter in Finland and everything magical that comes with it.



PICTURE 19. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest II (2023), Exhibition view. Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere. (Teuta Pashnjari 2023)

The repetitive use of textile within the series of the paintings started as an experimental trial that happened intuitively during the working process. Through the use of textile, I was able to create a sense of pattern, texture and a sense of rhythm that can convey a visual interest and symbolic cultural meaning, in this case, it allows space to dive deeper into cultural background as an Albanian woman.

In Winter Harvest my Albanian background is an important piece of information that I have implemented in the paintings by depicting self-portraits using elements of traditional Albanian clothing and patterns. Traditional Albanian costumes have a rich history and are known for their intricate designs and vibrant colours. For women, the traditional Albanian costume is called Xhubleta, a long-sleeved shirt, usually made of silk and cotton, adorned with embroidery, lace and sequins. It is worn with a long skirt, also embellished with colourful designs and patterns. A scarf is often worn on the head, completing the outfit.



PICTURE 20. Albanian woman wearing the traditional costume from Tirana (Source from Balkan Culture)

The location and weather conditions in which the painting series *Winter Harvest* was created, had a significant impact on the final results. Specifically, the absence of sunlight during winter in Finland, impacted the mood of the paintings that brought the depiction of a quiet and serene feeling and the use of a limited choice of colour palette. By incorporating the elements of my southern Albanian culture within the project, I was able to dive deeper into my memories and heritage with the result of allowing space for an open conversation regarding the artistic benefits of creating in a site-specific and time-specific context.

6.3 Video Art

Video art is a creative medium and a unique form of expression that I started exploring throughout the journey of my art studies at TAMK. Through the use of moving images, sound and the multimedia elements, video allows me to convey ideas, emotions and narratives in a way that is both visual and auditory. The possibilities that video art can bring are nearly limitless, therefore it is a medium I have incorporated into my artistic passage, which I can utilise as a format to create multidisciplinary projects.

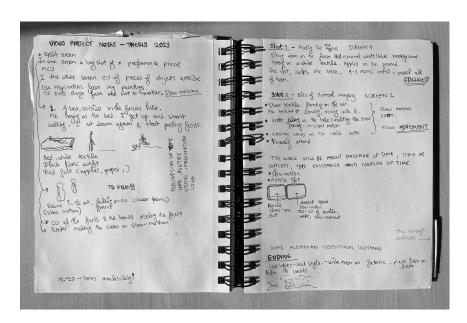
Video art is a format that allows space for the integration of different disciplines such as music, performance and sound design, which can enhance the overall artistic experience. My vision was to implement video as a form of visual diary in the *Winter Harvest* series because through video I am able to explore possibilities that are limited in painting, such as the exploration of the theme of time, movement and change.

My aim was to make a short documentary and performative piece that is connected and inspired by my painting series with the same title and background story, which I had already finished. Winter Harvest is a one channel, video art installation (04 mins 02 sec) that aims to portray my appreciation for Finnish winter whilst reminiscing my childhood memories during winter in Albania, my birthplace. The project was part of the Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere.



PICTURE 21. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest, video (2023), screenshot. Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere. (Teuta Pashnjari 2023).

I started the working process by thinking about a concept or idea for the piece. My vision was to create a site-specific and time-specific work that talks about my environment and my approach towards it during the time of the filming. When the concept was in place, I continued with the visual plan of the video in the form of storyboarding by making simple sketches and by writing different camera angles that will be used for filming. This was a very long process that included changes and rearrangement of the storytelling along the way. Before the shooting of the video, I started planning the production, where I began gathering the equipment, finding the camera assistant and figuring out the location of the filming, which was chosen to be in Rauhaniemi frozen lake and forest. The process of the shooting was quite challenging due to the strong wind and cold weather conditions that day and took an estimated time of four hours.



PICTURE 22. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest, concept idea and visual plan (Teuta Pashnjari 2023)



PICTURE 23. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest, video (2023), post production. Editing with Premiere Pro. (Teuta Pashnjari 2023)

By adding poetry in *Winter Harvest* the viewer is now able to connect and engage with the story even further. Within the video, a voice-over is implemented in order for a deeper understanding of the nuances of the work. My vision was to write a short poem that blends in with the visual part of the video but also allows me to push my creative boundaries by implementing a variety of elements within the project.



PICTURE 24. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest, video (2023), screenshot. Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere. (Teuta Pashnjari 2023)

Winter. I have been in Finland for so long.

Surrounded by a frozen lake and pine trees covered in snow

I am wearing warm clothes and multiple layers so I keep my body warm.

The grey clouds have been on the sky for months covering the sun, as if they were afraid that it will melt the snow.

Did you know that snow is melted clouds?

The strong morning wind caresses my skin and dances with my hair.

I am happy here and now I am familiar with the cold weather.

In search of balance between two different places.

Warm and cold. Snow and water. Blue and grey.

Oftentimes, I close my eyes and try to remember what winter feels like in Albania.

My childhood memories are fading with time but the need to recollect these memories comes so naturally when I am here. In search of my roots. Will I find them?

6.4 Textile Installation

Textile installation is a unique and versatile art medium that involves the use of textiles to create site-specific installations that transform the space they occupy. This form of contemporary art has the ability to create a sense of movement and fluidity, even though the medium itself is static. The interplay of light and shadow can add depth and texture to the piece. These installations can range from wall hangings to immersive, interactive environments.

Textile is an art medium that I started working with back in 2020. It is a form of expression that has allowed me to freely experiment with space, form and depth more than any other art medium has. By implementing textile installation into my art projects, in this case painting and video, an opportunity for diversity, exploration and interactive environments is created with the result of artistic projects that are both functional but also aesthetically pleasing.

The implementation of the textile installation as part of *Winter Harvest* mixed-media visual diary, happened in a very fluid, organic and intuitive way. The textile piece was attached to the gallery ceiling and was installed in between the painting series and the video art during the Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau in March 2023. A 12 metres of sheer fabric was used with the result of forming a site-specific installation that would complement the gallery space and the rest of the Winter Harvest series, creating a sense of memory and nostalgia.

The choice of using sheer textile for the installation, happened when I had a visual perception of the gallery space and in regards to the natural light coming through the windows. The sheer textile used for *Winter Harvest* has lightweight and translucency, allowing interesting effects with light and shadow that created an ethereal visual installation.



PICTURE 25. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest, mixed-media painting series (2023). Detail. Using textile as an art medium in the paintings. (Teuta Pashnjari 2023)



PICTURE 26. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest, Sheer Textile Installation (2023). Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere. (Teuta Pashnjari 2023)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this thesis indicates the importance of artist residencies and their contribution to the journey of artistic expression. It is found that artist residencies provide creative opportunities for artists to focus on their practice away from distractions and demands of everyday life. These programs typically provide artists with a dedicated space to work, as well as access to resources and support, such as art materials and sometimes, funding. Moreover, they allow artists to devote uninterrupted time and energy to their creative work, which can be valuable for artists who may have other daily responsibilities.

In addition, artist-in-residence programs provide opportunities for artists to engage with other creatives in collaborative projects through workshops, discussions that can help in enriching their professional work and network. As confirmed in the thesis, artist-in-residence programs can offer artists exposure and visibility through exhibitions and other public events that can be incorporated within the program that can have a positive impact on their careers and the broader arts community as a whole.

Through its exploration of artist residencies in general, this thesis has shed light specifically on programs located in Finland and their beneficial result on an artist's creative journey. The studies found that Finland is a very well established art destination with numerous successful artist-in-residence programs such as Arteles Creative Centre, The Saari Residence, The Mustarinda and The Helsinki International Artist Programme (HIAP), to name a few. Furthermore, the results of the thesis indicate that Finland is an ideal country for residency programs due to the high standard of living along with a supportive arts community that provides a supportive environment for artists to focus, create and research without stress of financial or social concerns.

The artistic part of my thesis titled Winter Harvest, a mixed-media project consisting of four oil paintings, a one screen video channel and a textile installation, was used as a case study for further analyse how the change of the environment and the introduction to a new culture affect the working process and inner state of an artist. The site-specific and time-specific series of artworks were created in the course of my residence in Finland during winter of 2022-2023. In the making of the project, my Southern European culture along with my point of view on the Finnish environment was implemented, with the result of a final body of work that is created within a site-specific context, forming a meaningful and personal connection between two cultures.

In summary, the findings of this thesis have made a valuable contribution to the field of artist residencies and has provided a platform for further research to build upon and expand upon the findings presented here. Specifically, they aim

to encourage artists to apply and participate in these programs due to the beneficial results and significant possibilities their participation can have on their artistic careers.

In future projects, my aim is to continue exploring the possibilities of creating artworks within a site-specific and time-specific context, by living and working in different locations around the world. Through this approach to art-making, I can explore new possibilities, artistic connections, and forms of experimentation that provide space for artistic development and growth. This method of creating art not only allows me to immerse myself in different cultures and environments but also challenges me to adapt and respond to new stimuli.

By living in a particular place for a period of time, I can observe and interact with my surroundings, gaining insight into the local culture, history, and natural environment. These experiences can then inform my artistic practice, resulting in work that is more nuanced, insightful, and meaningful. I believe that by living and working in different locations around the world, I can create art that is both personal and universal, reflecting my experiences while also resonating with others.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. RAW Exhibition Website



APPENDIX 1. Fine Arts Degree Show RAW 2023. Exhibition Website. https://raw-exhibition-2023.squarespace.com/

Appendix 2. Winter Harvest IV (2023)



APPENDIX 2. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest IV (2023). Oil on canvas, mixed-media with textile (100 x 120 cm). Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere.

Appendix 3. Winter Harvest, Video Art (2023)



APPENDIX 3. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest (2023). Video Art Installation, 4 mins. 2 sec. Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere.

Appendix 4. Winter Harvest, Sheer Textile Installation (2023)



APPENDIX 4. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest (2023). Sheer Textile Installation. Fine Arts Degree Show RAW at Gallery Himmelblau, Tampere.

Appendix 5. Winter Harvest, Studio View (2023)



APPENDIX 5. Teuta Pashnjari, Winter Harvest (2023). Studio View in Tampere, Finland.