

Anna Arutyunova: Greetings to all! My name is Anya Arutyunova. I am the Director of the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia in Moscow. You have probably heard that we have a residency program and that we support the Russian artists in Switzerland and the Swiss artists in Russia. At this round table, we were going to talk about what a residence is from the artist's point of view, why it is needed for an artist. It felt like the topic of residences is one of the hot topics in Russia: everyone makes them, everyone drives them, but at the same time the impression is that the organizers say the most about them. The artist's voice is lost in this thread, and, therefore, I see my task at this meeting is to listen to the artists themselves, answer their questions, and understand what residence means for artists, what they look for in residences and how we can continue to live in residences.

Valentin Dyakonov, curator of the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, curator of the second intake in the Garage Museum's Workshops and Residences: The [Garage Museum's] workshops exist for less than a year, so the topic proposed by Anna is very interesting and important to us, especially since the Garage residences program exists in test mode this year. We just throw some things into the wall and see if they stick or not. One of the topics that are relevant for us is understandable program creation for residence development, precisely in terms of what our colleague Beatrix Roof calls the mentorship program that is important for artists, full of events, meetings, and networking. I've got an idea that all artists present here have experience living and working in residences, if for no other reason than because the Garage Museum workshops' residents participate in our conversation, and, for sure, all the participants in this round table were still in some residences. It will be a very good reserve for the further development strategy of the Museum's residences at VDNKh (Exhibition of Economic Achievements) both for us and for you, if you share your experience, what was important and valuable for you and what you need to avoid and never repeat.

My first question is addressed to Anna [Meschiari], who was at several residences in her creative life. I would like to understand whether a contemporary artist exists today without having to go somewhere and be somewhere outside his home? Is there any home for an artist today?

Anna Meschiari, artist, Switzerland / France, resident of the second intake in the Garage Museum Workshops: Thank you very much for today's meeting! It is a great question. I've got the feeling that it is necessary to find a balance between constant movement, travel and a constant point of stay. It is especially important to have a physical workshop in which an artist can create for him who is engaged in visual art. Probably, this is somewhat different for an artist who uses other tools, but for us, it is just that. Concurrently, curiosity is very important for an artist. He must need to travel, see new faces, new places. He must face a language that he does not understand, watch contemporary art in an unusual context. Nowadays it's quite difficult to get an idea of the places where we were not, relying solely on information from the media because they give a prejudiced picture: you must travel and watch with your own eyes.

The main difficulty for me was that I got into an unusual language environment and was isolated when I came here [to the Garage Museum Workshops]. However, it became an interesting task for me: to learn how to communicate with people, to penetrate culture, which is not available to me.

Valentin Dyakonov: What was your strategy when you travelled to different residences? Did you come with your existing project? Did you come to specific places that were of interest to you? Did you

participate in some thematic residences where there was already a research direction that you had to adapt to?

Anna Meschiari: I participated in different residences. Therefore, it is not easy for me to give a straight answer. Sometimes the residences were preceded by some acquaintances. Sometimes it was a research work resulting in the residence and some kind of result. In other cases, I participated in open calls, and I was accepted into the residence. For the first time, I participated in Moscow in a residence that asked a topic or suggested sending a project. So this is my first experience.

Anna Arutyunova: I've got the feeling that they mistranslated it. I think Anna meant that for the first time she applied for a residence with a conceived project that required her to be present in Russia. Our annual open call at creative residences never sets a theme. Yes, it is necessary to talk about the project in the application because it is important for us to understand why the artist needs to be in Russia or in Switzerland, what kind of development his ideas will receive in another artistic context.

Pro Helvetia does not have its own residence. We are a foundation that allows the artists going to the residence, combines good ideas with good places, people with people, and covers costs. We have several partner residences in Switzerland, each of which works in its own format. Often the residence itself has thematic considerations. For instance, the Embassy of Foreign Artists residence in Geneva has several research lines and its own curatorial interests – “art and civic position” or “art and history” in addition to the general program when artists are offered to work with the archives of numerous international organizations whose headquarters are located in Geneva. But the Pro Helvetia open call is open and does not require a project made for the residence. On the contrary, it is more important for us to see that travel to Swiss or Russian residence is due to the artist's existing interest, the topics with which he works.

Among the topical issue that I hope we can discuss today: why, in fact, do you need to go to the residence? To make a new project there? To develop a project that is already being worked on? To get something important from the country's or the art scene's context in which you find yourself? So that your everyday practice somehow correlates with the experience of being in the residence?

Anna Meschiari: I had to respond with reasons why I should come to Russia in the case of Pro Helvetia. Far too often it happens that an artist must explain why his project should develop in a particular country and why he will feel good in a particular place. I have the project that is somehow connected with Russia. It is called Shake of the Universe (a significant part of the project is devoted to “Russian Cosmism” and Transhumanism). I believe that a residence is, above all, an obligation to itself because it is not easy to be outside the house for three months. Furthermore, it is the obligation to other participants of the process – the institution, artists. Of course, you need to understand that if the residence is research, then you will not offer a project that involves the creation of work of art at this stage.

Valentin Dyakonov: Could you briefly tell about the geography of your residences and, perhaps, describe some ideal residence?

Anna Meschiari: If generally speaking, then the ideal residence, I think, does not exist. Above all, it is essential that the residence provides basic household and financial needs because it is impossible to work for three months without knowing whether you will have money, and all the conditions necessary for

creativity. Furthermore, if an artist finds himself in a different cultural and language environment, it is essential that he can always get advice on any issues. These are the basic requirements for residence

Valentin Dyakonov: What about geography?

Anna Meschiari: The residence in Moscow is an important stage for me because I have never left so long and so far from home. I was in residence in Italy. It did not last very long. But there we worked less in workshops and communicated more with one another. Furthermore, I was in a residence in the south of France, where I worked in a school. My project was related to children's entertainment and activities at school. Another residence was in Berlin. Most of the time we presented our projects, communicated with people, and looked for those, who were interested in our projects.

Valentin Dyakonov: Thank you. Let's talk with other artists. Anya, please describe the geography of your travels and try to reply to the question. Can an artist exist without residences, without traveling somewhere else, to other contexts?

Anya Kravchenko, artist, Russia, resident of the second intake in the Garage Museum Workshops:

I am very concerned about this question because there is a feeling that the whole infrastructure seems to force you to be in the residences. It is not very clear how to show and create your work, except in residences. Although I have a fairly broad experience working in residences in the context of visual and performing arts – and from staying in institutional residences (for instance, at Ultimavez Studios in Brussels, Honolulu in Nantes, ICI-CCN in Montpellier), and in self-organized (FAC in Jura in Switzerland and PAF in Saint-Erme in France), there remains some internal disagreement with the fact that the residence in the contemporary world is becoming almost the only form of obtaining resources for their work. Generally, wandering around residences as a form of artistic life raises quite a few questions. I lived in a self-organized residence called PAF (Performing Arts Forum) in France. Wandering around the residences creates quite a strange world perception. Firstly, before your eyes there is no understandable art scene because you move all the time. I was not very interested in this because I wanted to have a longer connection with the context. Now, after three months of work in Moscow, this was also not so extreme for me, and there is the opportunity to leave for Petersburg, which I do regularly. But I've got the feeling that I would not want to be in the residence for more than two weeks. Maybe in a couple of years... The projects that I do are related to specific contacts and to specific people. It is impossible to bring all of them to the residences, and, therefore, probably, I would like to spend two weeks in the residence with resources and with a connection with the context. I am interested in going to the residence and showing work there, including. It's more interesting to do some research stages in a place where you live constantly, but for now, my project does not require me to do any geographical research. But there are artists, who are in need of different history landscapes.

Anna Arutyunova: If you take a long residence as an opportunity to get these contacts?

Anya Kravchenko: Any project results in new contacts, like any travel. I mean, going only for contacts seems to me not enough for the purposes of the residence, I want to do and show works. I also met a lot of people who learned about my work and whose work I learned living in the Garage Workshops. I mean, no way around it. It is connected with travels and movements.

Valentin Dyakonov: Inevitability of contacts?

Anya Kravchenko: Yes, the inevitability of contacts. I have nothing more to say because the question asked by Valya is relevant for me. Where is this balance and how to look for it? On the one hand, residences are a lot of opportunities. On the other hand, they diffuse the context perception a little and alter the way of living a lot.

Valentin Dyakonov: That is, does the context exist even for such an international thing that you do [performance]?

Anya Kravchenko: It influences. This internationality is a myth in some way. To a greater extent, contexts are now formed by some kind of events: either long-term exhibitions, or regular festivals, or places people come to. That self-organized PAF residence in which I lived is connected for me with a certain intellectual context, with philosophers, artists. In this regard, eventuality, two weeks seems to me healthier. I say this regarding myself and the projects that I am doing now.

Valentin Dyakonov: Is eventuality and thematic the same thing?

Anya Kravchenko: In some sense, yes: how the work will be seen, how it will be discussed, and what other works I can see in parallel at this time.

Valentin Dyakonov: It sounds simple, but it is important. Nastya, I have the same questions: your residences geography and does the artist exist outside this system?

Anastasia Potemkina, artist, Russia, resident of the first intake in the Garage Museum

Workshops: Is there an artist without a house? Here I am an artist without house, I live in three houses and, like a snail, all that is mine, I carry with me. My residence geography is insignificant. Generally, it's hard for me to recall these unfortunate few places, but I was just in Switzerland at the Artists and Labs residence.

Generally, I hate filling out papers and do not know how to do it. Now there are such bureaucrat artists who sit and fill in endless applications. I'm some kind of opposite front. My colleague filled out an application for me, for which I thank him. It was very difficult. Besides the fact that it was a residence in another country, which I had never been to before, it was a three-month residency, which is a lot. I had to work in a laboratory. We were assigned an institute – the Federal Institute of Forest, Snow, and Landscape, phytopathology laboratory. Generally, it is very difficult to start talking with it. It seems that all the conditions are organized, but the language is completely different, and what they think is a dry scientific language, for me to some extent has a deep political dimension. For instance, at some introductory meetings, laboratory workers say: "I study invasive species of flora, mostly all invasive species – from Asia." Generally, how the state treats environmental protection programs, how this correlates with migration policy, it looks like a curious way.

Let us suppose old Europe protects its native species, and I tell them: "Do you understand that it sounds politically strong" or "In this Petri dish we grow a pure culture", do you understand *how* that sounds?"

Generally, I ended this residence with a New Year's party in the laboratory. The next day I must leave. The laboratory head approached me and said: "You know when you arrived, I thought you were crazy, and then I realized that there is a logic in your words: in fact, what seems to us to be a scientific language, and what we are used to, may really look differently." Therefore, the most important part of this travel was probably not my work as an artist, but communication with such a super-closed community.

Valentin Dyakonov: Can you say a few words about the ideal residence?

Anastasia Potemkina: I don't know.

Valentin Dyakonov: We already have several check boxes: two weeks...

Anastasia Potemkina: No, two weeks are very few. I came to Italy to work. It wasn't quite a residence, but anyway. At first, I came to see how things were going, what context for the production of something; what was in Switzerland was great because no pressure of production, that is, I didn't have to do an exhibition necessarily...

Valentin Dyakonov: So no pressure of production is important to you?

Anastasia Potemkina: Yes for me. In the end, the result of communication with scientists was only a year later. That is, I left after a three-month residency to think.

Anna Arutyunova: That is, so as the residence was at least in two stages?

Anastasia Potemkina: Yes, at least two stages. This should be, of course, for a long time – what is it to come for two weeks.

Valentin Dyakonov: Ganna, can you describe the geography and answer some questions that you like?

Ganna Zubkova, artist, Belarus, resident of the second intake in the Garage Museum Workshops:

It is interesting that Nastya made a point on the communication issue. Communication is largely geography, too because being in one place and continuing the project in similar circumstances when something was started at the residence, but continued after some time, is geography defined by communication. As an example, I will cite a residence in Amsterdam. It was such an "ad hoc residence" (by the way, about an artist without a home: sometimes there is an art residence without a home, it was a residence that did not have its own venue), dedicated to the AIDS conference. Each of the artists – from Russia, Belarus, post-Soviet states – was placed in a specific context. I worked with commercial sex workers, for instance, someone worked with scientists – also a rather closed community. In many ways, the approach is not determined by what kind of work you want to do. It is determined by what political dimension you exist with this closed community. Most of the residence was devoted specifically to investigation and research, to clarify the artist's place in the systems of relations and communications; and, as it turned out, this is a political dimension, it cannot be removed anywhere, and it becomes important, like an object too. There I came across, for instance, such a concept as the artist's instrumentalization, which in my experience has appeared several times in Europe. It means that the residence fits the artist into a certain community, counting on that some purposes will be achieved. The artist in this situation gives meaning to what is happening to him. He finds himself in a constant fight for autonomy. I've got the feeling that there is such a thing with residences that you are not only in dialogue

with those who organize the residence, but also in a possible confrontation or take a critical position. But, most commonly, this comes in some kind of mutual finding of new interaction forms. If we talk about the ideal residence, then this is a “no pressure residence”, which allows you to return to the material because not only everyday practice is interesting. Do you remember? We discussed the residence as a ready-made, as an object with which you work in wider contexts. Yes, I’m interested in continuing and returning to the materials and not losing as easily as an event. Therefore, at least a month, two, three...

Anna Arutyunova: Yes, a little comment. Swiss artists who work in performance, I’m not talking about choreographers and theatre directors, no one can ever come for three months because it’s just a different pace and a different device for the process. Therefore, perhaps some disciplinary moment is important. Somehow, by default, most of us are visual arts.

Gleb Glonti, musician, curator, Russia: My name is Gleb. I am engaged with sound. I would like to add that we are probably trying in vain to come up with a standard: they say, good residences are so much and so much of this. In our environment of musicians, where a sound is meant, we are all connected. There is the Internet and you can communicate with the community. Generally, the geographical moment is not so important. You are in your inner emotions and thoughts, so you don’t have to move to get something.

Valentin Dyakonov: Can you tell me how musicians’ residence is arranged?

Gleb Glonti: This is an open question, how is it arranged and why is it needed. You said that this is a rather project-oriented story, that is, if in the end no project came out, then all for nothing. I don’t need a big production. I need a project. I understand that the context of other media is to make an exhibition. But it’s always either a concert, or an album, or some kind of sound installation if a musician goes somewhere. Therefore, in my case I first think what I want to do, then I choose a country. However, it may turn out that there are no residences in the selected country...

Valentin Dyakonov: Probably, there are no such countries...

Gleb Glonti: Of course, but let’s say you want to study something African musical... For instance, it is developed in Nigeria, but in Central Africa... Generally, it depends a lot on the media, on what field you work in. But the term also depends on this. It takes three months for some projects, for others – a week. It was interesting in Switzerland because there was a big production. I understood that this is a test for you too. You are somewhere in the place, they do not require anything from you and you have to set purposes for yourself and find some things that you can make it not look like you’re just staying somewhere and wasting time.

Valentin Dyakonov: I would like to return the microphone to Anna Meschiari. I had a question. Nastya and Gann mentioned the political context. It is understood that we have an unsystematic, extra thematic residence, but you probably had some kind of strategy with a political position in Russia, taking into account the current situation of the country in the international context.

Anna Meschiari: I would like to say about the independence in becoming an artist that you spoke about. For me, the pressure and stress are part of the creative process. I don’t understand how you can be in the

residence and not experience this pressure because it appears that you are coming on a vacation. But the residence is not a vacation. I understand what you are talking about when you mean that they do not require a result from you. This is another question. But for me, nevertheless, pressure is part of the creative process. It is probably better to go on vacation if we are not looking for pressure or stress. It certainly changes a lot concerning the political context. The possibility and impossibility of communication also change a lot, and probably if communication is impossible, then at some point there comes the limit of impossibility, and the artist reacts to it.

Concerning the political context... I really wanted at some point to go not to Russia, but to somewhere else. I spent quite a lot of time in the USA, where I dealt with space issues and space exploration. I discovered that I had a one-sided view of this issue. I understood that I needed to go to Russia, the country we are talking about when it comes to space exploration, and see how everything works in it. It is important for an artist to work with the interest that makes him visit. It's important for someone that they don't put pressure on him, for someone it is important that they put pressure on him. You need to deal with this somehow, but this is all part of one process.

Valentin Dyakonov: Nastya, would you like to comment?

Anastasia Potemkina: Yes, I would like to make an addition so that it was clear what I was talking about. The pressure is felt by the skin when you are in the residence because you came to work. Of course, this is not a vacation. I'm saying maybe common things, but I want to justify somehow myself. Generally, until last year I did not go anywhere just like that, but only for work. There is simply some pressure, which is to squeeze surely a certain product out of a person; we do what we do – we produce knowledge, not a product. The production of knowledge is less valued than the production of a material object.

Valentin Dyakonov: We still have artists who have experience with residences, but they have not said a word yet, so I go to them. Ulyana [Podkorytova], can you tell me too?

Ulyana Podkorytova, artist, Russia, participant of the second intake in the Garage Museum

Workshops: I have very strange residences geography, mostly in Central Asia: in Samarkand, in Baku. It was the longest residence. I lived there for three months, which was very difficult for me because I have small children and I couldn't go anywhere for eight years. My children are priority now. For instance, I found a contest in a musical residence that I had long dreamed of, where Lori Anderson was in charge of everything, but I could not, unfortunately, fly there because it was not possible with children. I can go for a long time where I can take small children with me. It is very difficult, but I remain an artist and want to work. The fact that I went to Baku for three months with my children was great. It was a residence from the Pop of Art Foundation, and there were great conditions. As a result, I made a rather serious project exhibition. It occupied three floors of a small museum. It could only be done because I had been there for so long. The participant had to make an exhibition and it is very difficult, it is terrible, but at the same time very interesting. Afterwards, we had a group that existed for several years. This is the infamous exhibition "In the Bushes": for three years we did exhibitions in the bushes throughout Moscow, we had about 20 artists – and we made a self-organized residence near Voronezh, in Divnogorye, where there was a very open leadership of the natural reserve. They proposed to take the most amazing places in the mountains, under the mountain, on the mountain. Anatoly Osmolovsky went with us, but it was hell travel because the

people who did the exhibition “In the Bushes” just broke half of the natural reserve. I was in Arkhangelsk. It is very important for me to make a project every time I go somewhere. It doesn't worry me, it doesn't force me in any way, and I am excited at the results because I come to work with the local context. To a certain degree I consider myself a geographical artist. I am very connected with Russia. I work either with folklore or with the Russian folk song tradition, which is often based on northern intervals and northern chants. Therefore, trips to Arkhangelsk as a balm for the soul, although we did practically nothing, but some blueprints. In Samarkand, I was in a partly self-organized residence, where I went with my girlfriend. She grew up in Tashkent. We agreed with the only local gallery that they will give us house and small financing. The gallery introduced us to a huge number of people from embroiderers to ceramists. It was such a residence of communication. It was short, only 12 days, but as a result, we did a small exhibition, which had objects and sculptures, and we still shot a good video... But neither the Samarkand project nor the project in Baku was presented on a large scale in Moscow. I am very offended because it is a huge work. For me, it is important that, having gone somewhere and done a certain research, I could then put out my work somewhere else. This is a priority.

Valentin Dyakonov: This is a good addition, thank you. In fact, I don't know about all the artists what their residences' experience is. Therefore, if someone else wants to say, please.

Ekaterina Muromtseva, artist, Russia, participant of the first intake in the Garage Museum

Workshops: I've got the feeling that it is important to talk about distinctions between the residence and the workshop. Because I was in the Garage Museum workshop, and not in the residence. It is still at home, you know half the people. As a workshop, it was perfect, a lot of space and a lot of communication. But as a residence – I don't know because the guys who arrived said that they were already bored and wanted to go home. I had my first self-organized residence in a nursing home. I went there to live for three weeks. I would like to do the same this summer, just take someone else, but did not have time. I've got the feeling that this is exactly what is interesting in residences when artists meet with other professions or communities.

Galya Lisovets, artist, Russia: I also want to talk about my experience. I was in a residence in Basel. It was an ideal circumstances combination for me because the next door was a residence that deals with digital art, and my specialization is digital art, media art, and new media. I managed to cross the two sides of my creative life, curatorial and artistic when I planned the visit and made plans for what I want to do there. I made several exhibitions with my works, and was lost in this institution curatorial secrets, for three months.

It is understood that depending on the media with which the artist works, depending on the method and on which project (research, working with sculptural materials and so on), it all depends on what the studio should be, where it should be, and what residence duration. In my opinion, a month is a minimum, and three months, if you can afford these three months, is an ideal duration, to work out meaningfully any project because it makes it possible to do research and your project, to be lost in the environment. For me, it has been three months back to back for the final product to be ready because my media requires a sufficiently large amount of time.

Valentin Dyakonov: Thank you. Let's go into questions and answers.

Alena Streltsova: Hello. My name is Alena Streltsova. I'm the managing editor of the magazine "Art". We started a project about art residences and over the past month managed to talk with 12 representatives of residences. It has been found that this is an absolutely perfect format, which has no minuses. Artists are moving towards a brighter future with leaps and bounds, and everything is too beautiful. There are problems with artists who wanted to talk with the local community. They manage to ask the same questions during the residence, stir up the water and leave, without having time to get to know the situation and leaving the community in a somewhat confused position. Sometimes there is a feeling that surface works are obtained from this. I am interested in the problematic aspects of this bright picture because artists can speak more openly. My question is about the problematic sides of the residences or their own mistakes, which maybe you should not do.

Anya Kravchenko: For me, this residence complexity was misunderstanding what kind of residence it was, but what I say is what Gleb said about the conceptualization of his own work within the given context. It is understood that if you work with the community, then, on the one hand, the artist needs to be given information where he goes, sometimes the residence does not have the resources to do this, to prepare somehow and, perhaps, understand what project to go with; and what exactly are you going for, for context, relaxation, or the like. Generally, we need a prelude so that everyone can understand what is this going to lead to.

Valentin Dyakonov: I have a technical remark for the future. On the one hand, we can have workshops-workshops as real estate, where a person living in Moscow just works, but there is a residential part that can be the subject of the rich relationships you described with context, themes, strategies and knowledge acquired in works based on supervised meetings, curated areas of research, but balance is needed. It appears that we will have to balance because there is no real estate in Moscow – our task is to have both this and that. It makes no sense for us to invite someone, if we are not exactly the workshops.