

Taking up residence across the globe

Programs offer fresh surroundings and inspiration for artists

ALISON GILLMOR

IN an increasingly connected and competitive art world, artist residencies have become important rites of passage for emerging and established artists.

Many of these programs invite artists to live and work at a site, whether that's a remote treehouse in Scotland or a studio in Brooklyn, giving them time and space — and sometimes specialized facilities and equipment — to focus on their art.

Some residencies are highly specialized — centring on, say, ceramics or printmaking — while others are wide-open and interdisciplinary. The duration could be from two weeks to six months.

Some ask that artists connect with the public, collaborate with other residents or work toward an exhibition, while others leave artists free to follow their own creative directions.

With all these multiplying options, the important thing, as Winnipeg artists Craig Love and Diana Thorneycroft both emphasize, is to find a good fit. At this month's First Fridays in the Exchange Art Talk, we'll be speaking with Thorneycroft and Love about their experiences with residencies, from a remote log cabin on the shores of Clear Lake to a studio in the Basse-Normandie region of France.

Love looks at the recent rise of residencies “within the context of all these art schools churning out thousands of graduates.

“People have got to go somewhere and do something,” he says. “In the last decade or 15 years, there are more residencies popping up every day.”

There's a residency in Zagreb, Croatia, focusing on “alternative culture, thinking and expression” that's situated in an abandoned factory that now houses a late-night club. (“If you dislike loud music and young people partying, this might not be up your alley,” an informational website warns.) There's an artist residency at the airport in Brisbane, Australia, and another that places artists on commercial container ships on international routes. There's an in-house artist program at the San Francisco Solid Waste Transfer and Recycling Center, where artists can work with discarded materials, and a residency at the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Institute in northern California where artists can hang out with astro-scientists.

There's a rural Hungarian residency that brings together artists and horses.

There's also a prestigious residency supported by Glenfiddich, which offers artists three months to live and work at the famous distillery in the Scottish Highlands. (There's an artists' urban legend that the company sends a bottle of scotch to anyone who applies, which, sadly, is not true.) Love himself attended a residency at Basse-Normandie, where his

While many Manitoba artists head to national and international residencies, there are also residencies that bring international artists to Manitoba.

This year, for example, MAWA (Mentoring Artists for Women's Art) is bringing in artists from Berlin; Lahore, Pakistan; Baton Rouge, La.; and London.

MAWA also has participated in an exchange residency with Miami.

Some residency opportunities offer some funding, but many are exclusive and “ridiculously expensive,” according to Love.

Still, as Thorneycroft suggests, these programs offer what could be the ultimate luxury for an artist: “You just get to concentrate on your work.”

To hear more stories about the good, the bad and the unexpected of artist residencies, join us for the First Fridays Art Talk/Art Walk with Craig Love and Diana Thorneycroft. The talk takes place on Friday, June 7, at 6 p.m. at the Free Press Cafe, with a guided art tour of the Exchange afterwards. Call 204-421-0682 or email wfpnewscafe@gmail.com to reserve tickets, which include dinner and cost \$25 plus tax.

alison.gillmor@freepress.mb.ca

‘People have got to go somewhere and do something... In the last decade or 15 years, there are more residencies popping up every day’

— Winnipeg artist Craig Love



Winnipeg's Craig Love is the artist behind Browning Lastly (clockwise from top), Balzac Zola and Ox Herding.

expectations — he wanted to follow his own creative flow — led to a few semicomical collisions with French cultural bureaucracy.

Thorneycroft has attended the Banff Centre several times, partly to get access to expensive equipment, including “the most amazing studio” for developing large-scale photographs. She has also done some satisfying stints at the Deep Bay residency at Riding Mountain National Park, organized by the Manitoba Arts Council.

“At the beginning, they didn’t have a phone, and you’d be totally isolated,” she relates. “It was exactly what I wanted, but it’s not for everybody.”

Another made-in-Manitoba residency sets up artists at the Churchill Northern Studies Centre, its unique geography, history and climate inspiring some fascinating work from visual artists, writers and musicians.

Creative people can interact with scientists and scholars doing work on climate change, subarctic ecosystems and sustainable tourism.

“Because it’s a research centre, you’re in a non-art context, which is actually kind of interesting,” Love says.

