

With the generous support of sculptor Heinz Aeschlimann and arts advocate, collector, and patron, Gertrud Aeschlimann, winners of the ISC's Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Awards are offered the chance to apply for a four- to six-week residency in Switzerland. This year, Margaret Carlson of the University of New Mexico and Kristin Desiderio of SUNY Buffalo were selected to live and work in Switzerland, becoming part of the Aeschlimanns' life in Zofingren and using the facilities of Art-St-Urban, an art center in the former Abbey of St. Urban. As ambassadors for the ISC and representatives for emerging artists, they were given unique opportunities to interact with the Swiss artistic and cultural communities, as well as to pursue and exhibit their own work. The Aeschlimanns are planning a future exhibition of works created by residency winners.



Art-St-Urban is a one-of-a-kind place. The peaceful energy it exudes creates the perfect working environment for an artist-in-residence.

In six short weeks, I experimented with dozens of new materials, learned several new machines and tools, worked on over 20 pieces, and finished nine small works and two large sculptures.

Welding became my main technique, as I attempted to use steel to convey ideas as well as structure. Senn AG invited me to observe CAD laser cutting, demonstrated the computer program with one of my own designs, and allowed me to try the TIG welder for stainless steel. I also experimented with asphalt, gussasphalt (an asphalt/bitumen mix), epoxy, bitumen, and tarpaper, but my best experiments came from combining textiles with bitumen and asphalt.

I spent a day observing the Aeschlimann construction crew pour gussasphalt for an interior floor. Being a tile worker, I appreciated seeing the material used like this. I thoroughly enjoyed

my time working with the technicians in the Atelier. Not many spoke English, so our communication consisted of small drawings and spontaneous games of charades to find tools and specific parts.

After working full days in the studio, we often entertained guests at Art-St-Urban. One highlight was a reception for a group of ambassadors to Switzerland, including U.S. Ambassador Pamela Willeford. The main event during my stay was the opening of the exhibition "Real-Irreal-Surreal," with 26 international artists, in Art-St-Urban's art pavilion and sculpture park. Some of my works were included in the show.

Each community I enter is an essential influence on my work. Many of my previous works involved collecting textiles from people in my surroundings. With Gertrud's help, I was able to continue this in Switzerland. Several people, including patrons of the residency program, donated fabric. My most successful work, both experiments and resolved sculptures, came from this effort.

—Margaret Carlson

I had no idea what to expect from this seven-week residency with Heinz Aeschlimann, only that the program was going to be tough. I thought, "No problem. I just put together my thesis exhibition." Needless to say, I was in for a surprise. When I arrived, I was given a tour of Aeschlimann Company and one of the studios where I would work. The studio was well equipped and close to a garage that housed every tool and machine one could possibly need to make sculpture. Although I was a bit jet-lagged, I was already excited. The next stop was Art-St-Urban, but before we left, I was given the keys to a Ford Fiesta. I followed Heinz along the curvy road down to St. Urban. We arrived at Pavilion E, a former psychiatric ward transformed by Heinz and Gertrud into an exhibition/studio/residence space. It was gorgeous, functional, and inspiring. I had the option to stay with Gertrud and Heinz in Zofingen or stay alone in St. Urban.

The set-up was perfect, and Switzerland was absolutely fantastic.

I was introduced to materials that I had never worked with before and could not obtain in the States. For example, gussasphalt, a type of mastic asphalt bound with bitumen, is a great material to cast and form. I immediately fell in love with bitumen. On top of all this, I was also given a chance to have a project laser-cut from steel. I had access to more than enough materials, tools, machines, and resources to keep myself busy for the rest of my stay. Toward the end of my residency I exhibited my work at Art-St-Urban.

I also attended many social and cultural events, where I discussed my ideas and works with ambassadors, entrepreneurs, politicians, artists, and academics. At Art Basel, I went to opening receptions, and I visited galleries and museums all over Switzerland. I had an amazing experience on many levels and created pieces that are the beginnings of future ideas.

—Kristin Desiderio



Kristin working with bitumen and enjoying some well-earned leisure time.