

Tarek Haddad

Art Residency in Bellwald

The three-month residency in Bellwald has been an interesting experience of adaptation, self-reflection, and growth. It took a while until I got used to the idea that, when I woke up in the morning, my view from my window was that of a beautiful mountain. Each day provided a different experience, depending on the weather. I definitely embraced the tranquility of being away from busy streets and the city life, but I also missed having an active social life, especially during the last month, after I had finished most of the work that I needed to put in for the project.

Spending three months without a car meant organizing my time according to the train schedules, which I quickly grew very keen on; it was more enjoyable than driving, and less stressful. When I first arrived, I couldn't understand how people slept, read or worked in the train while passing such beautiful landscapes; I was moving from left to right to take in the views. Funnily and ironically, by the end of my stay, I had gotten so used to those sceneries that I started doing the same. But the continuous and long rides had taken their tolls on me.

I also spent tremendous amounts of time walking on foot, through forests, mountain trails, or from a town to another. This meant a lot more engagement with nature, and a lot more physical activity than the life I led in Beirut. I was also open to chance encounters; sometimes I selected a random destination and went there without checking what to expect, sometimes I decided where to head on the spot.

It was liberating to be able to focus on my project without having to worry about everyday distractions and work requirements. It was also a chance for me to allow myself more artistic freedom and spontaneity.

It was both absurd and funny that there wasn't much available in Bellwald, except for one small minimarket, Volg. The restaurants were closed most of the time. I only ate there twice throughout the 90 days. It was a bit strange that if I needed something from a pharmacy, I'd have to go to another town, or that if I wanted something from the grocery store, and it was past 6:30pm already, I had to wait till the next day for the store to open again (even in bigger towns).

But all of this made the experience of living in Bellwald even more unique and memorable, one that I will surely miss and look back on with gratitude and fondness.