

Checkpoint:
Gina Roitman
at Can Serrat from April 3 – 23, 2018

I came to Can Serrat to work on a novel that I began in 2004. The following year, I went to Germany to do background research for the novel but instead of research, the visit resulted in a documentary about returning to the town where I was born and its Nazi past. The resulting documentary which I co-produced, co-wrote and was the subject of took some eight years to complete, and another two to promote and show at festivals.

The novel? It languished in a drawer.

In the ensuing years, I published a book of short stories and co-authored a biography but sporadically returned to writing the novel...in my head. When I arrived in Can Serrat, I had been working on the novel for a few months and had about 30,000 words. When I left the residency three weeks late I had over 107,000 words, i.e. about 440 pages.

This was my first stint in a residency. And it was eye-opening. I have never been so productive in such a short period of time. The writers' room was pregnant with words and plotlines, and the silence there was a constant incentive to keep moving forward.

From my point of view, Can Serrat cannot be described; it can only be experienced. For me, it was life-altering.

I arrived and immediately began to wonder how – and why -- I was chosen and what was I doing in this hive of young, creative minds. Everyone had such fascinating projects, bending the light of art, redefining its borders. But it seemed to take no time at all for me to learn that this wasn't about anything other than the artistic process. It was about absorbing the energy and turning it to good use in your own work.

Thanks to Can Serrat, my novel is very near the finishing point and hope to have the first draft done by July. There is no question that I would not be at this juncture without my stay in the residency and have encouraged some friends I know who are in need of the kind of experience I had.

The camaraderie and gentleness that existed amongst the 18 artists when I was there seemed to be something we achieved by osmosis. The very atmosphere at Can Serrat inspired us to be open and generous. I left Can Serrat not only with the experience of a lifetime and 107,000 words of a novel but with friends I will cherish for a lifetime.

Finally, I have nothing but praise for the administrative team who work so tirelessly To ensure that the residency runs smoothly, interacts with other artistic communities and was always available for assistance.

Gina Roitman

St-Colomban, Quebec

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