

Creative mobility hubs and the decentering of the global art world:

A study of the fire station artist-in-residence program in Doha |

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Abstract

In recent years, artist-in-residence programs have expanded exponentially, spreading to every corner of the globe. What was once exclusively a Western phenomenon has now blossomed into a global network of creative spaces, encompassing regions long relegated to the peripheries of the art world. The objective of this article is to analyze the role of such cultural infrastructures in shifting the global art world, enabling alternative artistic mobility pathways beyond the traditional established Western art centers. The article focuses on the case of Doha's Fire Station, an artist residency complex launched by Qatar Museums in 2015. The research is based on interviews with administrators running the space and artists who participated in the artist-in-residence program, as well as qualitative and quantitative text analysis of the resident artists' biographies. This article situates artist-in-residence programs within the wider context of investments in global art infrastructures such as biennials, museums, and art fairs, which have in recent decades enabled a number of emerging cities to rise as new centers on the world art map. Artist-in-residence programs enable artists to establish deeper connections with local art communities, allowing for personal exchange and experimentation. However, the article shows that artist-in-residence programs remain strongly embedded in an imbalanced global art world, and their ambitions to decenter the art world are constrained by unequal global mobility regimes.

Biography

Jérémie Molho is Senior Research Associate at the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration, Toronto Metropolitan University. Jérémie received his BA in Middle Eastern studies and MA in urban studies from Sciences Po Paris, and his PhD in geography (2016) from the University of Angers, France. From 2016 and 2019, he was research associate at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy (EUI), and then Marie Curie fellow at the National University of Singapore (2019-21) and the EUI (2021-22). His doctoral research explored the globalization of art markets in Istanbul, Singapore, Doha and Hong Kong. His post-doctoral research analyzed the governance of diversity in Doha and Singapore. Jérémie's current research compares the urban policies and politics of attraction and retention of skilled migrants with complex trajectories spanning across Asia, the Middle East and Canada. He is also the Principal investigator of the project Fostering Integration Through the Arts (FIT-ART), a partnership with the Toronto Arts Council (TAC) funded by Canada's Social Science and Humanities Research Council, which studies the TAC's program for newcomers and refugees.