

Artist residency program as a new form of creative process

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Abstract

The article analyzes the role of artist-in-residency programs (art residency) in the context of socio-cultural development of the city, its main characteristics and multi-functionality. After a brief historical overview, the article describes main modern vectors of the transformation of the artist-in-residency programs, caused by globalization processes. The characteristics of the programs, being a means of organization, goals, participants, etc. are revealed. By the examples of New York art residencies the article shows the relationship among art residencies and other social institutions.

Keywords: art-in-residency program, artist, art institutions, interaction, cultural exchange

The early 21st century is characterized by an active search for and introduction of new forms of organization of the creative process. One popular and quickly developing format is an art residency, that is: the educational-creative program in which artists, musicians, writers and other people of art participate. Participation in the art residency suggests a temporary joint stay of participants that allows them to “withdraw” from a daily routine. As a rule, the art residency includes workshops, exhibition space, laboratories, necessary equipment, etc. The objectives of the art residency are as follows:

- Triggering and optimization of the creative process;
- Organization of the creative environment and, as a consequence, cultural-creative exchange between participants of the art residency, local art community, local community, educational institutions, business structures, government institutions, and so on.

Propagation of art residencies is largely due to their multi-functionality and flexibility that allows them to transform in accordance with interests of their stakeholders. Major functions of art residencies listed below are formulated on the basis of the author’s own studies; analysis of specialized literature [6, 7]; and open-access web sources [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9]. The main functions of art residencies are as follows:

- creative function, which consists in creating conditions (technical, material, organizational and communicative) necessary to form the favorable environment, permitting to concentrate on thinking-over, implementation, presentation, and distribution of a certain art project;

- educational function, which consists in dissemination of knowledge and development of concepts⁴; it is realized via organization of lectures, discussions, and master classes involving residents and guest professionals. Events of this kind boost the general cultural-and-educational level and promote better understanding of modern art;
- organizational function which manifests itself in the trend that art residencies become communication hubs of a district or city and their activities facilitate the growth and diversity of culturally meaningful events in the area: expositions, festivals, concerts, fairs, various art and society-centered actions.

Despite art residency pertains to new forms of organization of the creative process, it dates back to the cultural past of the mankind. During all history of arts, there were artists who traveled to acquire new impressions, ideas, inspiration and communication. In travel, people of art also pursued more pragmatic goals like expanding the market for sales and looking for new customers.

The first specimens of the art residency in the modern sense appeared in early 20th century: the Worpswede colony of artists (Künstlerkolonie Worpswede) in Germany, Yaddo, Woodstock Guild Byrdcliffe Arts Colony in the United States and so on.

Some of the early art residencies were organized by the very artists, who left their native places of residence, striving for inspiration and “co-creativity”. The examples of art residencies of this type were Worpswede, Germany, 1884; and Gregory Fellowships, Great Britain, 1951. Residents of the Worpswede Colony were so prominent personalities as Reiner Maria Rilke and Heinrich Vogeler.

Patronage of arts was a more widespread means of organization of such residencies, e.g., there were Corporation of Yaddo, 1900 and Woodstock Guild Byrdcliffe Arts Colony, 1903.

Apart from the creative function, i.e. optimizing and triggering the creative process, the art residency started to perform the organizational function relative to the surrounding world. It was social orientation of activities of the art residency that started to hold the lead in 1920s-1930s, and dissemination of socialist and communist ideas in the art medium played the decisive role. Art residency “Bee Hive” (in French, La Ruche, 1850–1934) was founded in France under the influence of the utopist theory by Charles Fourier. It was his contemplations about a “self-sufficient commune” of 1,600—1,800 people working for the sake of mutual benefit which formed grounds for the arrangement of the art residency. Such world renowned people as Guillaume Apollinaire, Fernand Leger, Amadeus Clemens Modigliani, Chaim Soutine, Mark Shagal and many others lived and worked in “La Ruche”.

Orientation of art residencies toward the solution of socially vulnerable problems continued in 1960s-1980s. Their participants championed withdrawal from the bourgeois world and establishment of their own community of creative and free men. Along with the trend to withdrawal from the bourgeois society, the opposite strive developed among artists, that is: to involve in the life of the society, local communities and social groups. This very trend turned into the determinant of starting and dissemination of art communities. Globalization of the modern society also facilitates their development. Against the background of overall economic,

political, and cultural integration and unification, men of art strive for the development of the creative environment. Availability and timeliness of information, as well as mobility and freedom of travel have increased due to novel means of communication. The possibility of interaction in single spatial and temporal continuum emerged.

New York Experience

In the 20th century, the creative class became the starter of economic growth, innovations and improvement of quality of the city environment. In the last decades, municipal authorities of Europe and the USA were promoting the development of various art institutions, understanding their significance for the development of city territories.

The role of artists in the gentrification process was first analyzed by Philip Klay in a study devoted to transformation of several US cities — Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington in 1960s. Artists used to “come” to retarded areas seeking cheap lease of workshops and exhibition spaces. They were followed by the public interested in their creativity and belonging to the middle class. Numbers of cafeterias, restaurants, supermarkets for the middle and premium class areas grew, crime level dropped, and eventually new housing and facilities were built in these areas. Finally, the rent and house prices started to go up.

After the coming of artists and creation of spontaneous art residencies in Williamsburg (Brookline, New York), the crime level decreased, new stores and markets emerged, prices for immovable property and rent increased.

“Introduction” of art residencies in the backward areas of the city boosts social well-being of residents, their creativity and degree of involvement in the municipal life. For artists, it means the opportunity of expanding professional links, promotion of art products and integration with the society. For art institutions, it implies the possibility to attract and cover the broadest possible audience. Local residents receive available educational programs and cultural leisure in their area. Market development goes on for businesses. City authorities see the development of depressive areas and former industrial zones.

The number of art residencies was on the rise starting from 1990s, and their growth continued in the 21st century. Apart from the quantitative increase, qualitative changes in the activities of art residencies happen. Currently, art residencies differ in type, concepts, specialization, organization, location, etc.

Art residencies differ in specialization. They can be solely centered round representatives of single form of art – artists, sculptors, or writers. At the same time, there are interdisciplinary art residencies, which unite representatives of diverse creative professions: art critics, scientists, cinematographers, actors, musicians, and designers.

Initiators and organizers of art residencies are various cultural or scientific organizations [10, 11, 12] (a museum, university, modern art center), municipalities or bodies of regional or federal government, art patrons, large companies and corporations. However, the art residency can be arranged by artists per se. Their numbers vary from one to 50 individuals, generally being 8-15.

Art residencies can be located both in the city medium and vigorously interact with the local community in the open air that implies solitude, the possibility to leave the context of daily routine and get away from hustle and bustle of big cities. One of most widely known art residencies is OMI International Art Center, which is located in the farming area in two hours of drive from New York. It occupies the area of above 1.5 sq km and has an open-air sculpture museum. Programs last from few weeks to a year; on average, their duration is 1-3 months.

In New York, the city policy maintains and encourages cultural and ethnic diversity and there is the understanding of the important role of artists in the municipal life. This leads to high concentration of various forms of creative interaction in the city space. A colossal number of commercial and non-commercial organizations offer a variety of art-in-residency programs.

There is also the Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens. Up to 1986, it was a deserted bank of the river and illegal garbage area. A group of artists and community members under guidance of Mark di Suvero converted this place into the open studio and exhibition area for sculptors and the cozy park for locals. Today it is a renowned open-air museum and art residency, which offers sculptors the materials, workshops and stipends for creating large-scale sculptures and multi-media installations. Above 40 expos of sculpture are held on the territory of 1.6 ha annually. The park also offers a broad spectrum of free services and events: morning physical exercises, lessons of yoga and dances with instructors, lessons in sculpture, lectures, concerts and cinema festival. The fair of farm products is open in the park on weekends.

In 2012, the Pioneer Works Art Center opened in the industrial area Red Hook. The obsolete building of the metal works was refurbished to become the art residency. Apart from expositions, the arts center is holding master classes and concerts of live music on the regular basis, and there is a cafe. The center has gained a city-wide popularity and attracts the broad audience; as a result, the industrial and warehouse district turned into the fashionable dwelling area.

The art residency based on the Queens Museum offers workshops to artists and provides the opportunity to stage an exhibition in the museum space. EFA studio program is built around the professional publishing equipment which is owned by this residency. A.I.R. Gallery works and offers residency programs exclusively for female artists.

The conducted study has shown that combined efforts of artists, art institutions, the municipality, business circles and local communities, aimed at development of art residencies, promotes optimization of the city environment, development of the creative potential of the people involves and appearance of novel art works.

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