

Architect in residence : Not a common thing

When architects go in-residence they quite often are invited because of their proven qualities both as researchers and lecturers. Architecture schools and universities have set up (group)exchanges that sometimes are called residency, but can be judged as an integral part of education. "Residencies in architecture" are also used as a title to express an intense relationship between guest and institute for a period in stead of an actual stay. The relationship is aiming to produce a collection of debates, workshops and lectures about the found conditions and/or theory.

There are places that provide a residence for architects, yet both compared to the amount of architects and the amount of residencies for artists it is very limited. Going in residence as an architect or designer is not as common as it is for artist, this is clear when you start looking for residencies... it even seems most residencies that offer place to architects just ticked the box. Some however truly see how an architect in residence adds to their 'in residence program'.

Why do architects hardly go in residence?

1. Architecture projects are long term projects they tend to take years and architects are working simultaneously on more projects. So once the career as an architect has taken off, it is very hard to leave these projects alone for a private investigation away from it all.

"We've only had one architect and one product designer in residence. About 5 others were selected (landscape architects and product designers mostly) but cancelled because they had other work commitments. They expressed the difficulty of attending residencies because of the intense, continuous workload and job commitment usually associated with their practice."

The Guapamacátaro Center for Art and Ecology

2. Architects are problem-solvers, so they develop projects based on issues found in real situations, and they like to be confronted with a sense of urgency. In their practice as architects they tend to find challenges on a number of levels, from the conceptual development of projects to concerns how the building will function over time once it has been taken into use. This in contrast to the 'artist' that has a personal drive to make his work.

3. With the fall of many ideologies also the believe in architectural theory has crumbled. Realism and pragmatism are explored widely by the current generation of architects. The current crisis might give an impulse to theoretical discussions although this has hardly surfaced yet.
4. Architects speculate on how reality works and can be enhanced or changed. The best way to test architecture is to actually build it.
5. The complexity of the building process and technical challenges are best solved with broad and detailed knowledge. Teamwork is necessary to build, the result will be better when working together with other specialists.
6. Apart from architecture academics it is very rare that architects go in residence. So it does not cross their mind to go in residence.

What is a residency meant to generate?

Is it solitude and tranquillity that brings you an epiphany?
The removal from the everyday that allows you to reformulate what it is about?
Is it the culture- or context-shock that allows for new approaches?
Is it working out themes that need more time and concentration?
Time and space to work with people or instead with hands?
To cross border that are normally not crossed within the practice?
Experiments with new materials?
Is it time to develop more personal formal language or approach?
Is it time to develop, write or draw a new theory ?

What is the alternative to going in residence ?

How do architects develop their work and/or widen their horizon?

1. **INTERNSHIPS** : the most common way for architects is to expand their horizon is to work for an office that is ground-breaking in their mind. (especially internationally students and young professionals)
2. **SWITCHING OFFICE** : Every office has a different way of working, it can be refreshing to change jobs. Although with the current market-conditions most architects won't be looking at other offices as eagerly as before.
3. **COMPETITION** : Competitions are invested in by offices and individual architects not only to acquire new commissions. It forces the team to make a clear and sound proposal that cannot be ignored. Wether one wins or not you have added a project in your portfolio.

4. **COLLABORATIONS** : within building projects there is quite often room for a special project to add identity to the building. Collaboration with artists, designers expands the vocabulary of the project.
5. **RESEARCH PROGRAMS** : theoretical research funded by universities and more and more institute.
6. **EDUCATION** : expanding once theoretical baggage by following a masters program or summer school (these are organized by architecture schools as a way to expand their visibility and network)
7. **MOVE YOURSELF** : As architecture is informed by local conditions it is important to travel and research unfamiliar buildings and landscapes and cities.

A selection of extraordinary residencies

MAK L.A. in Schindlers house

The MAK Center for Art and Architecture has been focusing on innovations in art and architecture, supporting new tendencies and interdisciplinary developments which pursue spatial and conceptual experimental approaches.

MacDowell Collony US has 32 residencies spread over 320 acres;

“Artist are not allowed to pay visits without invite” & “We feel it is important to provide artists of all disciplines a place to work away from the interruptions of daily life. This philosophy includes architects. The creative process requires moments of solitude and time to think. MacDowell provides that for architects as well as its other artists.”

Place Making residency at The Historic Dockyard Chatham

Six teams each comprising of a maker and an architect will work on an open brief that asks the teams to work on a proposal for the last major undeveloped site in the former Royal Naval Dockyard. Each will be joined by a student from the Fine Art course at the School of Arts, providing a live learning opportunity.

Bellagio: collaborative research with mixed disciplines

‘The Bellagio Residency program offers academic writing, arts along with literary arts, and practitioner residencies a serene setting conducive to focused, goal-oriented work, and the unparalleled opportunity to establish new connections with fellow residents from a stimulating array of disciplines and geographies. The residency community generates new knowledge to solve some of the most complex issues facing our world and creates art that inspires reflection, understanding, and imagination.’