

Grand Tour d'Italie | questionnaire

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Artist mobility

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What can we do to enable artists to maximise the residency opportunity? What are they looking for in a residency? What immediate and ongoing impact do they have?

Italian Council

Considering your experience with other similar institutions what would you specifically recommend to the recently established Italian institution? which is the most urgent issue Italian Council should face? (Production, circulation, promotion...)

Italian scene

After this experience what do you think of the Italian art scene? Can you help us in highlighting what strength & weakness, opportunities & troubles may be?

Grand Tour d'Italie | questionnaire, answered by Jean-Baptiste Joly

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The Grand Tour d'Italie was really different of similar projects, like the one I experienced in France in the early nineties with colleagues of other residencies, a tour organized by AFAA (nowadays Culture France) including Paris, Marseille, Toulouse and Bordeaux. The Italian Grand Tour had something that is generally not offered: 20 meetings for portfolio reviews. The selection of the artists was very good, for this reason this part of the tour was extremely fruitful. The opportunity of exchanging with 20 excellent artists is rare, all of them were respectable as artists and we could enter into very interesting discussions with them. I could imagine that some of them will apply for the Solitude fellowship; this will increase the chances of having one or two of them in our next selection. It was also extremely interesting to see the works of some of them either in the frame of the Quadriennale or in the selection for the Italian Art Price in the MAXXI museum.

For the next round I would suggest to start the visit with a first session during which Viafarini precisely explains the reasons and the expectations for the Grand Tour. Also a more precise presentation of Viafarini would be very helpful. Even though the guests knew more or less each other, it is always good to invite guests to participate actively from the beginning, for example in asking them to introduce themselves and their institution properly. Three hours of video screening is not really community building at the beginning of the Grand Tour and doesn't facilitate communication if the group will stay together for around five days.

Viafarini succeeded in inviting very experienced representatives of excellent artists residencies, but didn't take the opportunity of engaging with them a deeper exchange on the role of residencies. This would have been useful for all, for Viafarini, for the ministry of Culture, for the future Italian Arts Council and for the participants. Dedicating a day to this kind of exchange would probably bring more results than the answers that each of us will try to give to this questionnaire.

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A multitude of conferences and meetings has been dedicated to this question, so don't expect a really deep answer by asking this in a questionnaire like this one. If this question really interests you, yes, organize with Italian artists residencies, with non-Italian artists residencies in Italy and with international residencies abroad a proper public conference about this large, very large topic, in Milan or in Rome. First of all, a residency has no immediate or ongoing impact, neither on artists, nor on institutions. Never tell to any possible founder, sponsor, local or national politicians that an artist residency will have an immediate and ongoing impact, you would bring yourself into an unbearable situation! A residency is a long-term investment whose results might be visible much later, for the artists, for the institution and for the biotope around.

From the point of view of the artists the reasons for choosing a residency are :

- Getting under rather good life conditions a time frame in which an artist can dedicate her/himself to his/her work. In Akademie Schloss Solitude we say it is a "time without qualities" that can be shaped, organized, used by the artist, not depending on the institution or on any other daily life time-consuming side activities.
- Good material conditions, i.e. a proper studio not shared with another artist, a space for living with a kitchen and a shower with warm water, a double bed and a good internet connection. Good material conditions is also receiving a decent fellowship, having your

travel costs covered by the institution, some budget for a project and for foreigners a correct health insurance.

- A staff that is experienced in terms of technical support and able to involve you in its network on a local or on a broader level.
- The encounters with other artists are also essential: Well selected people, international, not only visual artists but also from other disciplines. Behind this question, two other questions about the organization of a residency: How is the selection system organized, which disciplines are involved in the program. Taking only visual artists in an artists residency is probably less fruitful, even though many residencies concentrate on this (more visible) discipline. Opening an artists residency to all artistic disciplines or even to social sciences, humanities and economy produces optimal results in terms of transfer of knowledge, skills and experience.
- Being part of an interesting city (New York, Mexico, Sao Paolo, Tokyo etc...), of an active art scene (Brussels, Amsterdam, Berlin), or of a well recognized program (ISCP, DAAD Berlin, Akademie Solitude, for having these organizations in your CV)

Italian Council

Considering your experience with other similar institutions what would you specifically recommend to the recently established Italian institution? which is the most urgent issue Italian Council should face? (Production, circulation, promotion...)

Production, circulation and promotion belong to the same logic and shouldn't be seen separately. One individually depends on the other. At the moment I know to little about the Italian organization of ministries or administration on a national, regional or local level to answer properly this question. Seen from an abstract point of view a ministry doesn't interfere into direct artistic decisions and cares for the general frame in which art can be developed, securing the general conditions for this, imagining a general strategy after having taken into consideration the different actors of the art scenes. An intermediary body (like a National Council for the arts?) has a budget from the ministry (or a mixed budget including funding from regions and cities) with which it takes position in terms of projects, geographical priorities or topics of research. This intermediary body works together with all the actors of the art scenes; depending on the topic it is open to other areas of public intervention like urbanism, economy, transportation policy etc.

Again, the question is somehow not precise enough for giving a proper answer and I do not know enough of the Italian administrative and political organization to answer properly.

Italian scene

After this experience what do you think of the Italian art scene? Can you help us in highlighting what strength & weakness, opportunities & troubles may be?

Not sure if after this experience I know the Italian art scene. The selection of the 20 artists met during the Grand Tour was well thought in terms of quality and diversity of their esthetic positions. After visiting the different sections of the Quadriennale one would say that, like in every country in Europe, there is no singular Italian art scene but a multitude of art scenes, some rather connected to commercial galleries, or to a specific geographical area, some closer to philosophical questions, some trying to give a kind of Italian version of a globalized art scene.

After five days in Milan and Rome I could see again that artists (the better ones...) always say something about our time, about history, about the state of a country. From this visit I learned a lot about the country itself, about the historical trauma of fascism and of the Ethiopian episode, seeing in the work of artists the long-term consequences of the facts themselves, but also their disappearance from the collective memory and consciousness. Seen from abroad the Berlusconi episode might be seen "only" as a sad parenthesis in Italian history, somehow unpredictable and now closed, I wouldn't have imagined the deep trauma that it caused in the Italian society; Thanks to the work of some of the artists we met I could also understand how the Berlusconi years were related to the precedent historical episodes of fascism and of the Ethiopian war. In regard of this historical background the presence of migrants from the Middle East and from Africa takes a different meaning and reflects on a crisis that has its origin in North-Africa, in Syria, Irak, Libya, but also in Italy itself, a country that, like France didn't reflect on its colonial past. Some of the artists we met deal openly with these questions, link them one to another and are able to formalize the aporia we are facing nowadays, in form of very convincing art works. This was for me the main benefit I got from this sojourn.

In terms of strength or weakness I was deeply impressed by the Prada Foundation, the very place where an Italian understanding of art and of the role of art in the society can be experienced.

Interestingly enough, the exhibitions at Prada Foundation were not focusing especially on Italian artists. They are rather challenging an Italian and international audience with international artists who deal with the questions of our time. Somehow the rich Prada Foundation has the power of its own visibility; it is also connected to the rest of the world and succeeded in finding a coherent

architectural formalization for its strategy. What kind of strategy might a weaker Italian administration and ministry of culture invent, confronted with the perfection of the work a private foundation? My final question: Would an exchange of views or even a cooperation between the future Italian Council for the arts and private foundations be possible?

Grand Tour d'Italie | questionnaire – Boshko Boskovich – Residency Unlimited

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We would much appreciate a feedback at the end of this project: for the next editions what aspect of this project should be further developed and how? Did you took part in a similar project, if so can you describe it?

The artist presentations were very good – however at times I wished that we had more time for questions. In Rome there was very little time to talk to artist after their presentations, however it was very helpful that the artist stayed during lunch so I was able to communicate with them and ask questions over lunch. Perhaps in the future having an activity after the artist presentations lunch or coffee where the artists we met gather with the panel together in an informal way so further exchange a dialgoue can take place. The lunch format in Rome was very good since it was not seated so one was able to talk to many artists and walk from one to another for conversations in a very informal way. I would strongly encourage this format for future visits with artists since there is no pressure on the side of the panel or the artists and conversations take place in an organic way during such a gathering.

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What can we do to enable artists to maximise the residency opportunity? What are they looking for in a residency? What immediate and ongoing impact do they have?

The Ministry could fund residency programs in different parts of the world where Italian artists could apply could be a good start. For instance a start could be that the Ministry starts a dialogue with different respected programs and funds each for an Italian artist. A start could be having one on each continent - Europe, North/South America, Asia and Australia, Africa.

I would imagine that artists are looking to further develop their practice and promote their work in different parts of the world. I think that residency programs are important because when artists are situated in a new context they are more likely to experiment and expand their practice in different ways. The immediate impact that a residency can provide is broadening the professional network (artists, curators, critics, institutions) as well as gaining new cultural experiences through dialogue and engagement with a new place. Exchanging knowledge in a new geographic region can only enrich an artist's life and get them to expand their personal and artistic horizons.

Another residency program that could benefit both Italian and international artists could be a residency in Milan, Rome or Turin where a program can be created for Italian and international artists. This way there could be an exchange between international artists and Italian artists in Italy. Perhaps the Ministry could partner with foundations from Italy that could be interested in such initiatives since it would be a promotion of Italian culture and arts in Italy for artists that come from abroad.

Italian Council

Considering your experience with other similar institutions what would you specifically recommend to the recently established Italian institution? which is the most urgent issue Italian Council should face? (Production, circulation, promotion...)

I think that the Italian council should support production of work since production is usually linked either with commercial galleries or with institutions that commission work. Supporting artists with means to produce works is a very important and emerging artists who have a good career but not so much financial support can really benefit from such programs.

The second aspect can be the circulation of programs/exhibitions of Italian artists through partnering institutions worldwide. A good example is the British Council that support production of exhibitions worldwide by British artists. This means that they would partner with certain art institutions in geographies of choice and work with local museum directors and curators and art centers that would promote Italian artists. This would mean that the Italian council would have a double role one that networks with art institutions worldwide and supports the production of exhibitions financially. I think that it would be important that the Italian Council not only works with big museum institutions around the world, but mid size and smaller institutions like Kunsthallen and art centers which would probably be very opened to exhibiting the Italian art scene and the budgets for that kind of programming would probably be less than just working with big museum institutions.

Italian scene

After this experience what do you think of the Italian art scene? Can you help us in highlighting what strength & weakness, opportunities & troubles may be?

After meeting with all the Italian artists I feel that I understand Italy as a country in a much better way. My impression was that the artists that we might be deeply engaged with the country they live in, the identity politics of their own roots, how Italy fits in the globalized world that we live in, the migration issues that Europe is going through. The question of heritage from World War II was something that I did not expect to surface as much as it did. It was very interesting to hear a younger generation of artists who is questioning the position of colonial Africa and the role of Italy in Albania during World War II. I did not expect that the Italian artists would be as much engaged in identity politics and it was a very pleasant surprise since I feel that I learned so much from all of them.

Grand Tour d'Italie | questionnaire – Emilie Villez – Kadist Foundation

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Overall my feedback it very positive, I found it very efficient and informative, well organized. It was really valuable to be able to see exhibitions which featured works by the artists we were meeting.

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I think residencies have multiple ripples in time, some immediate repercussions in meeting people for the research they are conducting at the moment, but also enlarging their network and creating future opportunities to collaborate with people they will have met during the residency. For that reason, it is important to facilitate meetings with other artists, curators, researchers, etc. At Kadist, residencies most often result into an exhibition but we tend to organize an introductory event (sometimes public, sometimes by invitation) at the beginning of the residency to “introduce” the resident to the local scene, by selecting a precise group of people who we think will be interested by the artist’s practice, and thus creating a small community who can already follow the project’s development, before the exhibition opens.

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Probably facilitating the mobility and production of artists and curators from Italy abroad (which contributes to visibility), but it’s also important to balance this with support to local organizations as well, who are doing the prospective work and showing the artists first.

Italian scene

After this experience what do you think of the Italian art scene? Can you help us in highlighting what strength & weakness, opportunities & troubles may be?

It is interesting that there is a recent development of practices focusing of post-colonial issues; similar as in France it came later than in other countries.

Sometimes, the formal result of the works was a bit disappointing in relation to the conceptual intentions and research. I wonder if it’s not related to the market.