

Collecting Architecture Territories: Beirut and Doha

ARCH A4106

Advanced Studio VI

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with Adam Bandler

This studio is a continuation of the evolving research project, *Collecting Architecture Territories*. At the heart of the project is a hypothesis that collecting is a term, practice, or condition that allows us to glimpse something of the emerging cultural logic of the early 21st century. The project targets one of the most significant developments reshaping the intersection of art and architectural practice over the last three decades: the veritable explosion of institutions and foundations that have emerged out of private art collections. *Collecting Architecture Territories* proposes that the historical institution of the museum is undergoing a transformation that requires new forms of spatial, cultural examination and design interrogation.

The studio expands the problem posed by the transformation of the museum to ask what new conditions of collection and organization beyond its walls the mutation of the contemporary museum signals. The studio relies on the notion of territory to help understand how collection, and its sister terms asset and value, circulate among new cultural institutions as well as the zones, cities, nations and regions in which they are lodged. It suggests that collecting processes draw together cultural artifacts, finances, resources, bodies, military controls, and new technologies within active spaces of accumulation and exchange, which we describe as territories of collection.

The studio considers architecture both as an agent that organizes, supports, and informs a range of contemporary collecting practices, but also increasingly as an object of collection in its own right. With this double role in mind, the studio will probe various collecting systems to speculate on architecture's relationship to the infrastructures of movement, the networks of investment, the technologies of protection, as well as the strategies of viewership, exposure and circulation implicated in the territories of collection.

The studio will travel to Doha, Beirut and Amman. Students will choose sites in Lebanon or Qatar, locations that sharply inflect notions of collection and that have distinct conditions of access, mobility and circulation. Where private global art collections seemingly share a frictionless economy in which objects, curators and collectors migrate effortlessly, in the Middle East this mobility is often interrupted by precarious politics and territorial controls. Institutions must contend with heightened risk while they manage a range of threats and vulnerabilities, from the financial to the political. This is a territory of museums and other sites of collection both curtailed and defended by supplemental walls, boundaries, check points and controls. The studio will examine and exacerbate these conditions, constraints, and instabilities to work through their implications for architecture and for contemporary collecting apparatuses in the widest sense.

Students will have the option of working alone or in pairs.