

Collecting Architecture Territories: Beirut

ARCH A416

Advanced Studio VI

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This studio is the third iteration of the ongoing research project, *Collecting Architecture Territories*. The project is tuned into 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. The project proposes that the historical institution of the museum is undergoing a transformation that requires new forms of spatial, territorial and cultural analysis. Starting with this transformation it asks what new conditions of collection and organization beyond its walls the mutation of museum signals. 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.

The emphasis upon territories recognizes the contemporary global proliferation of various collecting activities, which are no longer concentrated solely in traditional urban centers, but have become scattered, occupying a range of "non-sites." The studio will rely on the notion of territory to ask how collection and its sister terms accumulation, asset and value circulate among new cultural institutions and the zones, cities, nations and regions in which they are lodged. The spatial diffusion of contemporary art centers will serve as lenses for further speculation concerning architecture's relationship to the infrastructures of movement, the networks of investment, the technologies of protection, as well as the strategies of viewership and exposure implicated in the territories of collection.

The studio will travel to Doha, Beirut and Amman, sites that sharply inflect notions of collection and that belong to distinct strata of access, mobility and circulation. Where private global art collections seem to share a frictionless economy in which objects, curators, collectors migrate more or less effortlessly, in the Middle East this mobility is often interrupted by precarious politics and territorial controls. If the global shuttling of Jeff Koons' balloon dogs describes a contemporary incarnation of the museum without walls, the Middle East institutions that operate through the management of extreme risk, and through the burden of extra techniques of containment, represent pockets of political, institutional difference. This is a not territory of museums without walls but a territory of museums both curtailed and defended by extra, supplemental walls, boundaries, check points and controls. The studio will sample a wide selection of collecting practices in both Beirut and Doha to examine and exacerbate these distinctions.