

“Hors les murs”, before “Villa Médicis Hors les Murs”

Background

Villa Médicis in Rome (Académie de France à Rome) has been a property of the French government since the XVIIth century. Villa Médicis is under the responsibility of the French Ministry of Culture. After some reforms following French Revolution, Villa Médicis was opened to painters, sculptors, architects for stayings of 6 months to 1 year. Although the scope of artistic disciplines was extended and the selection was not any more restricted to students of French academies, the number of residents kept restricted. Moreover, globalisation and new ways of mobilities for artists in order to train themselves and deepen their activities, showed new interests of artists for a greater scope of countries. In some of them, the French Government was owner of a building like Villa Kujoyama in Japan. But it appeared that this system could not be generalized and that a more flexible scheme was necessary to launch, without considering any building properties but using the existing commodities offered by the partners. “Villa Médicis hors les murs” - “Hors les murs” today - was launched by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1980 and has been run by CulturesFrance agency since 1995, with the support of the French ministries of Culture and Communication and Foreign Affairs.

How it works

The programme has a main aim which is to support any artist or professional wishing to develop an artistic project in any country of his/her choice. The staying varies between 3 and 6 months, between January and December. The main expected benefit is the liberty and responsibility given to the artist while choosing a foreigner experimental field of experience. Beneficiaries used to receive staying allowances and a return ticket in economic class. The system has been changed: they nowadays receive a total 10 000 EUR grant, including travel expenses.

The main target groups are individual artists or professionals without age limit. The scheme is opened to French creators and artists and foreigners having lived in France for at least 5 years. All contemporary artistic disciplines are considered, except Literature¹, Cinema and Audiovisual.

Candidates must fulfill the following requirements:

- to have completed one's studies;
- to be implicated in professional life;
- to be able to present former works; and
- to be free of professional constraints during the research period.

Potential effects on the mobility of national and foreign professionals (includes also compatibility with EC regulations). There are two main objectives in this respect. The first is to help artists and creators to become more autonomous, while taking over an individual staying in an unknown country, and to get them more acquainted with the current social, economic and cultural constraints, in order to know better how to work in different conditions. In such situations, artists and creators have the task to invent new means of communication to promote their ideas and work. The second expected benefit is the discovery of a different culture, while learning from artists and people of this territory.

¹ As far as Literature is concerned, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated “Missions Stendhal” in 1998 and this scheme has been run by CulturesFrance since 2000. With a length of 2 weeks up to 3 months, “Missions Stendhal” allow 40 writers per year to stay in any country of their choice, in order to achieve a writing project.

Results

The scheme benefits 20 candidates per year, who receive each 10 000 EUR. The total yearly budget is 200 000 euros. Between 1995 and 2009, about 775 candidates have benefited of “Villa Médicis - Hors les murs” or now “Hors les murs”.

Different National Assembly and Senate reports have been delivered about the various artistic mobility schemes both run by the French Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Culture and Communication. In some of them, “Villa Médicis Hors les Murs” or “Hors les murs” was considered as one of the most efficient devices. On the contrary, Villa Médicis and Villa Kujoyama’s schemes were criticized as costly and lacking a certain efficiency. Moreover, this type of device has been criticized in the sense that it may be no longer adapted to the ongoing mobility’s needs, in terms of method and locations. In the scheme’s name itself, the reference to Villa Médicis has been given up. Coming back to the impact of “Hors les murs” CulturesFrance responsables would like the scheme to be more visible and they will work this out in the coming years.

Since 2000, CulturesFrance has been interested in investigating to which extent such devices as “Hors les murs” could be applicable at a wider scale and able to benefit European and not only French or French residents’ beneficiaries.

“Hors les murs” seems to be a very efficient scheme for beneficiaries. They organize their staying the way they want (including as far as financial aspects are concerned). Many of the beneficiaries include a mention about “Hors les murs” in their curriculum. “Hors les murs” is as well a European and international scheme.

Sources

Contact details: “Hors les murs”, CulturesFrance, 1bis, Avenue de Villars – 75007 – Paris, Tel.: +33153698300. Website : <http://www.culturesfrance.org>

Interview with Aruna Adiceam, Head of Département de la Coopération et de l’Ingénierie culturelle at CulturesFrance, the Pôle Résidences being part of this department.

Documentation provided by the cahrgée de mission in charge (Glenda Laporte), at the Pôle Résidences.

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