

ARTFORUM

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GHANA'S FIRST INDEPENDENT ARTIST RESIDENCY ADDS FELLOWSHIPS, SPACE

Accra, Ghana's Noldor Artist Residency, established this past November with an inaugural four-week residency awarded to emerging Ghanaian artist Emmanuel Taku, has announced that it is adding a yearlong program for junior and senior fellows and that it will be occupying a 7,500-square foot space in a former pharmaceutical warehouse in the city's burgeoning Labadi arts district. The fellowship program is aimed at emerging and midcareer contemporary artists from Africa and its diaspora, with the intent of helping them collectively deepen their practices, while fostering a sense of community. Additionally, the organization hopes to launch its junior fellows into the primary art market via representation by a commercial gallery.

Noldor has named Ghanaian artist Gideon Appah as its inaugural senior fellow. Appah is known for his mixed-media works featuring acrylic paint layered heavily over collaged photos, posters, and prints that conjure the family life, folklore, and surrounds familiar from his homeland, to which he has returned after several years abroad. Emerging Ghanaian artists Abigail Aba Otoo and Joshua Oheneba-Takyi have been awarded the junior fellowships. Otoo's mixed-media work addresses female identity and mental health and centers on the Black female form, while Oheneba-Takyi explores notions of displacement through the image of the chair in a practice that comprises drawing and painting. The newly renovated warehouse hosting the program is a large U-shaped structure featuring connecting footbridges and washed in natural light and has been divided to include artists' studios.

"The notion of the artistic commune is a recurring theme throughout art history," explains Noldor's founder and director Joseph Awuah-Darko. "These often-repurposed industrial spaces, among which Beijing's reputed 798 art district, have acted as havens for some of the most iconic artistic production in history. By revisiting these decaying warehouses – once a vast pharmaceutical factory complex – we envisioned and seized their full potential at a time when access to artistic infrastructure and resources is extremely limited in Ghana. Beyond the material support to its artists, Noldor mirrors the organic and collaborative dynamics that

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characterize past and current artist communities – establishing it as a thriving hub for contemporary art, committed to nurturing its artists’ creative process.”