

Street Art & Urban Creativity, 17.07.07

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In recent decades, Urban Art has become one inescapable reality in the public space of cities throughout the world. It is such a significant trend that we can now talk about it as one of the main artistic movements of the 21st century, not only because of its geographical profusion, but also because of the diversity of artists, techniques, medium, discourses and languages that it embraces.

It is a phenomenon that is as global as it is singular, very relevant in the History of Art, by the complexity, creativity, ephemerality and paradoxes it implies. These characteristics make it difficult, on the one hand, to define, to study and reflect, but on the other hand promote a very strong artistic production and the renovation of the plastic discourse in the urban landscape.

In this context, the municipality of Lisbon created the Urban Art Gallery, or GAU, in 2008. The Urban Art Gallery is a municipal platform dedicated to graffiti and street art questions. With this gesture the city publicly recognizes street art and graffiti as expressions of urban art, as a subculture globally existing in the city, and also provides spaces throughout different areas for artistic intervention along the urban mesh.

When GAU was created, we knew it would be necessary to look at the urban art phenomenon in a holistic way, adopting strategies that would promote not only artistic production and the enrichment of the city landscape, but also other dimensions, such as the divulgation and awareness for the importance of cultural heritage, reflection and research, inventory methodologies, support for the edition of new publications, cultural animation and pedagogy, international relations.

Since 2008, and over the last 9 years, we developed many projects in this artistic field; we have worked with many artists and authors and we can see Lisbon art works of the most relevant and prestigious national and international artists in the global street art scene.

In particular we would like to highlight the work that we have been doing in social neighborhoods and that has become one of the priorities of GAU in recent years, since urban art can be a very important tool to promote dialogue between

different generations. The creation of urban art pieces can be a source of cultural and artistic value, enriching neighborhoods and contributing to the appreciation of the territory and sense of belonging.

In this context, we have decided to create an Urban Art Festival in the city – Muro – that has already had 2 editions. The first was in 2016 in Bairro Padre Cruz neighborhood; the second in 2017 in Marvila. The success of these events has confirmed that peripheries can become new centers of intervention, contributing to revitalize the experience of public space, to the creation of new identity features and the deepening of the sense of belonging between its residents and the territory.

In this way we reinforce the dimension of Urban Art and Community intervention in the municipal strategy of urban art, as well as the role of GAU as a project from the city of the city, reasserting the municipality as an entity that invests in proximity policies, giving value to life experience in the neighborhoods, promotes democratization and access to culture, reinforces social and creative inclusion, working with everybody, with all those who wish to intervene through an authorized way, in public space.

Because of all this we are very happy to witness national and international recognition of Portuguese artists and urban art in Lisbon, nowadays considered one of the most relevant capitals in the field of graffiti and street art production. I want to express my gratitude and admiration to the municipal team that has been leading this area of city policy, with 2 of them also participating in this conference, Sílvia and Inês. It is also our great satisfaction to participate in spaces for the discussion and reflection of urban art and cultural policies such as in this conference. The research and understanding of this plastic universe is another priority of GAU intervention. It is of great importance for the reflection and debate about urban art between researchers and academics, artists, communities and all the citizens that enjoy the public space.

Dialogue and heritage awareness are fundamental premises for the development of good practices and for the definition of efficient strategies in order to have a more creative, balanced and harmonious experience of the artistic and cultural patrimony of our city.