



**Street Art &  
Urban Creativity  
Scientific Journal**

Intangible Heritage

Vol. 3 / N° 1

**Urbancreativity.org**

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Vol. 3 / N° 1

Title:  
Street Art & Urban Creativity  
Scientific Journal

Editor:  
Pedro Soares Neves

Copy Editing:  
Susan Hansen

©Authors and Editors  
Lisbon, November 2017  
Print Version: ISSN 2183-3869  
Online Version: ISSN 2183-9956

**ap<sup>2</sup>** Associação para a  
Participação Pública



**Street Art & Urban Creativity**  
International Research Topic

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PROGRAMA DOUTORAL HERITAS – ESTUDOS DE PATRIMÓNIO (Ref.: PD/00297/2013)  
[Programas de Doutoramento Nacionais e Internacionais – 2013]



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Executive committee

SAUC Scientific Journal Editor

The SAUC 2017 conference bridged scholarly and practice-based approaches to urban creativity. This year we included a range of diversified activities that included practical interventions, roundtable discussions (guest-hosted by Nuart), exhibitions, a book launch, and guided visits to sites of urban creativity around the city of Lisbon. The impact of the practice-oriented activities was particularly positive, and generated a strong connection between theory and practice – effects that also had an impact on the conference and the development of the Scientific Journal. The rhythm of the debates during the conference was inspiring and constructive. The intangible dimensions of the conservation of graffiti and street art were regarded by most to have a broader capacity for dealing with graffiti and street art as heritage, albeit mainly through documentation. Although physical conservation was regarded by some as a ‘non-issue’ this is, in fact, conceptually where we may find the greatest contemporary challenges – in response to which a range of possible solutions were suggested, such as self-preservation by the creator’s communities.

Practice-based approaches from the professional fields of public art and urbanism augmented the academic debate. The Lisbon council’s experience was a particularly relevant contribution for the clarification of the difficulties and opportunities associated with institutional practice. Several participants emphasized the incompatibilities that may arise when graffiti and street art are developed in an institutionalized manner. It was argued that these forms of urban creativity have a valuable capacity for resilience in adapting both to attempts to institutionalize, and attempts to oppose, these forms of practice.

Texts from both scholarly and professional/practice-based approaches may be found in the SAUC Scientific Journal Volume 3. The volume also includes contributions from the parties responsible for graffiti and street art cultural policies from the Lisbon and Portuguese national government culture area. Their presence at the conference and the quality of the interventions described made clear the increasing relevance of urban creativity in the city of Lisbon and in the national and international panorama. Further, the participation of international authors representing curatorial, museological and commercial approaches contributed to a 360° perception of sustainability practices and conservation problematics. Of particular relevance was the delicate line of tension between illegal and commercial – which delineates the necessarily dual behavior of the field, with one original side informal and the other formal – challenging the durability of these processes.

The opinions shared in the conference about the production of spontaneity raised some provocative questions, in response to which a variety of distinct strategies were presented – giving emphasis to the where, how, and why, but less relevance to the what and who. This volume of the SAUC Scientific Journal takes these debates conversations forward in presenting a series of papers tightly focused on the issues of intangible heritage and knowledge transfer, and the range of strategic responses to these challenges that could be adopted. We hope that this volume is both a timely resource and a reminder of the positive and productive debates and conversations held at the SAUC 2017 conference.

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## Contact and information

info@urbancreativity.org  
 Urbancreativity.org

## Caring for creative possibility: Locality as heritage

**Agata Wiórko**

PhD candidate at Catholic University of Portugal and Junior Research at CECC (The Research Centre for Communication and Culture) School of Human Sciences | UCP; School of Human Sciences | UCPPalma de Cima 1649-023 LISBOA - PORTUGAL  
 Doctoral Researcher in the PhDnet programme at Justus-Liebig-University in Giessen, European PhDnet “Literary and Cultural Studies”; European PhDnet “Literary and Cultural Studies” Alter Steinbacher Weg 38 - 35394 Giessen  
 agatawiorko@gmail.com

### Abstract

This paper addresses the problem of how to articulate the notions of heritage and locality, while looking at accessible public space as the ground for the awareness of its possibilities. Acknowledging the importance of scattered creative and co-creative experiments – spatial and political practices which are seen as proposals with great cultural value – what is proposed is a challenge: to look at neighborhoods as players in a more densely connected urban narrative. The way heritage is reinterpreted appears then as a citizenly contribution for a more diverse urban sensescap, where values such as vicinity or provocation can become operative. A major conclusion is that an ethics of the curatorial – as implied in the concept by Irit Rogoff – is the basis for a pragmatics of the urban realm where heritage can have a *futurant* sense.

**Keywords:** Public Space, Culture, Curatorial, Heritage, Locality, Spatial Practice

*So the everyday (as a theoretical and practical arena) has the potential ability of producing, not difference, but commonality. It might be that this is where its generative ability lies.*

Ben Highmore (2012: 2)

This paper addresses the problem of how to articulate accessible public space with a wider awareness of its possibilities. But there is a difficulty: how shall the multidimensional experience of the urban everyday, of art in the city and of the subtle strategies of the curatorial (Rogoff, 2015) become a matter of heritage (management)? How can such distinct intangibilities be articulated and fuel consciousness in the urban stage and how might awareness rise out of the communication of concepts and the production of situations and encounters happening on the urban stage?

I speak from the perspective of Cultural Studies, arguing, as a principle and with Ben Highmore that “everyday life studies demands the kind of attention to form that is usually reserved for art.” (Highmore, 2012: xiii) For Lefèbvre, “it is in everyday

life and starting from everyday life that genuine creations are achieved, those creations which produce the Human and to which men produce as part of the process of becoming Human: works of creativity.” (Johnstone, 2012: 31)

### 1. Contrasting localities

Community-based artworks, for instance, are indisputably co-creative models for concrete localized communities to co-enunciate both locality and a global meaning, sometimes in eloquent intercultural interaction. Street-based social awareness becomes visible in many other sorts of urban interventions in the fields of performance and the visual arts, some led by the State, others by invisible urban players.

It is within this emerging narrative of inclusive articulation that all sorts of grassroots cultural projects, in particular those implying the practice of everyday life spaces (de Certeau, 1984) can appropriate the local to turn it a part of a global conscience. Interdependent of the knowledge of how networks can be used to design a collective horizon, these spatial practices, despite their very diverse typologies, have become sometimes a part of more or less official (political) discourse.

So the attention shifts from the global to the local which is appearing must ground its reasoning in a better and better understanding of a globalized world and its multilayered narratives – both in their ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ practical consequences, be it within the perspectives of critical scepticism (Critical Theory) or in the sphere of motivational entrepreneurialism (Creative Industries). The city, also as an ecosystem of values and ethical positions, demands from citizens and the urban powers that be to recognize the many faces of pluralism (Nawratek, 2012).

There is then something intangible in common between projects like Fábrica Braço de Prata (a cultural factory mentored by a renowned philosopher) and Travessa da Ermida (a venue for culture and art owned by an esteemed ophthalmologist). The added value that these projects lend to the city, and in particular to its neighbourhoods, comes from their potentially intertwined perspectives, which materialize as free-access urban cultural concepts, but only as long as their contrasting identity is kept dynamically clear.

## **2. It's happening in the neighborhood**

Lisbon has witnessed new movements such as municipal entities promoting street art (GAU) or fostering citizen participation in local partnerships (BIP ZIP programme). On the other hand, the recent popular upheaval against the demolition of an old building in Praça das Flores should not be understood independently of a distant fact: a group of cultural managers, architects and other members of the community activating a whole area of Ponta Delgada by means of the ‘Quarteirão’ – an expression where the vernacular fully overlaps the limits of the intervention (a city block), in expressive transparency.

That's why small organizations like Palácio Belmonte – run by a free-thinking economist and self-styled landscape collector – create their own very specific urban cultural intervention and communication strategies, completely ‘separated’ but also parasitically ‘integrated’ in the urban narrative (of Lisbon, and of Lisbon as touristic destination in particular), both questioning and challenging policies while fuelling their discursive potential by means of ambiguity or even controversy.

We know from human geography or urbanism that any dynamic city is a balance of density, diversity and complexity. But still, it is an ever-present philosophical challenge to know how to continually redefine complexity in a world where hegemonies such as those of commerce and industry disturb the transformative powers of locality. Here the concept of hegemony (Laclau, 1996) can become highly operative. This means inventing and more or less regularly communicating practices for dealing not only with the dimension of particularity, but also, and in particular, with the dimension of time in urban life, which of course implies introducing the idea of our critical understanding of heritage (heritage being a result and a legacy of the awareness of time, independently of its scope).

## **3. Sensing a future**

Because urbanity is, amongst other things, about activating the senses, and aesthetic participation in the world is still a crucial endeavour toward a complex idea of citizenship, to interpret and then participate in urban reality is then a crucial aspect of creative citizenship (and not only to produce nice things to embellish the latest hostel or barber shop – even when these reach high levels of artistry or design proficiency). The problem is frequently one of an impossible translation, one that is frequently ‘lost’: the past into the future. Memory into engagement. The moment back to the historical. For Carlos Fortuna (1996), it is about choosing now, in the pure contingency of the present moment, what to share with future generations, in a time defined by the flux generated by the Internet.

The void, along with multifunctional takes on the materiality of the built environment – approaches that many planners and politicians seem to fear – is for instance as inspiring as the consolidated city when it comes to breathing life into the urban fabric. Now, what is crucial is to study the ways this emerges in terms of our sensorial life. Along with the emergence of critical endeavors such as vertical urbanism (Campos, 2011) what is at stake are the means of a redistribution of the urban sensible (to paraphrase Rancière, 2014), the idea of sensescape in Landry (2012) is here an absolutely precise, and at the same time highly captivating concept, because, in its straightforwardness, anyone can appropriate it.

#### 4. Cultural developments

Each new project with urban cultural relevance must then point to a specific approach of certain urban elements – for instance endangered heritage, buildings or traditions whose value is not adequately acknowledged, or simply a funding opportunity that a set of partners could try to explore. It is about seizing the occasion by means of a reconceptualization of shared space, memory, identity, or, of course, the immaterial character of an atmosphere.

We could remind ourselves here of Charles Landry's (2012: 13) idea of "urban literacy" (understanding how places work). There is a whole jargon available here, which goes from the more active perspectives – Cirugeda's recetas urbanas, for example – to categorizations such as Mary Louise Pratt's concept of contact zones – where various identities are taken up, protected, discombobulated and played out (Green, 2003: 27).

So, there is thus a global community highly aware of the issues of locality and at the same time struggling for their own ways to cope with globalization. On the other hand, Krzysztof Nawratek (2012: 69) says that when considering the city as a biopolitical machine there are incorporeal (law) and material (urban fabric) factors that "shape human behaviour, sustain interpersonal relationships – and, in general, shape a certain type of human being as a citizen, or user of a city."

One might reflect then on how urban art influences this process and even takes part in its policies. For the inspiration and creation process of urban scape interventions it is highly important to investigate the local palimpsest of the city fabric – crossing its multilayered structures, in social, historical, and geographical senses. Take the example of the activity of Palácio Belmonte in the surrounding ruins at Pátio de D. Fradique.

In recent years, the production of large scale artworks (Disoriented Pavilion, by Camila Cañeque, in 2014; Things to Come, by Stefan Kornacki, in 2015) strikingly transformed the atmosphere of the place for months, by ephemeral installations which obviously both enriched the experience of traversing the place, no less than its publicity; such ephemeral aesthetic improvements were an added value the owner of the Palace managed to offer to the guests of his Alojamento Local (Local Accommodation). A highly specific spatial configuration (remains of the eighteenth

century earthquake) thus becomes an infrastructure for ongoing symbolic renovation. The complexity of the results is enormous, when one considers the sheer amount of passersby of all sorts of nationalities, and the way that a private entrepreneur interacted with the narrative of the district and the neighbourhood – the iconic Castelo area.

A particularly rhetorical statement of this attitude was a 'sail' installed on the terrace (a work by Jana Matejkova-Middleton): in that privately owned area, a beautiful terrace, visible from afar, like a flagship, the installation turned the huge building symbolically into a vessel. Furthermore it should be noted that in this gesture Belmonte – internationally acknowledged for a skilled tradition-based renewal (heritage craft) – demonstrated how an intuitive curatorial and art production strategy within a long-term commitment to heritage and identity can be productively mixed with short-term provocations.

This is in line with a note by Carlos Fortuna:

There is a futurant sense in heritage, sometimes unexpected, which can be passed to the next generations. The only condition is that it does not remain a prey of the action and the rhetoric of the nostalgic touristic market. (Fortuna, 2016: 7)

This leads me to praise the virtues and virtualities of the curatorial, when it manages to convey aspirations of diverse communities and partnerships in dialogue. You don't even need the works to be conversational (Kester, 2005) – in the sense of imposing a top-down dialogism – it is good enough to let diverse agents acknowledge a certain degree of (non-)participation (the idea, in Babo (2015) of the public as an activated entity). In some cases, the process can start following political decision" (Lorente, 2002: 94), which is of great interest in the realm of contemporary policies for sustainable cities.

One could argue that in this regard, if/how/when art is fuelling the vitality of the neighborhood, the mere fact that artistic interventions interrupt the local everyday, leads not only citizens, but also policy-makers, to react. It imposes an aesthetic challenge, an activation of opinion.

## 5. Conclusion(s)

We need to flesh a notion of aesthetics as it might impact on the theorizing of everyday.

Ben Highmore (2002: 19)

In many of the cases I have studied, artistic and urban culture projects somehow generate folds in the tiring or at least inconsequent narratives of tourism (or politics), while not completely losing their connection to valid grand narratives (from Community to Tradition or Myth).

One could argue that local inventions like the ones I have been mentioning are contributing to a certain competitiveness based on locality – and specifically local heritage – that ultimately could contribute to more diversity in public life. As Landry (2012: 29) states, “the public realm acts as the connective tissue within which the buildings forechords and streets a pattern of mosaic. The urban design knits the parts of the city together into a more seamless whole, so each element gains from its proximity to the next.” This is where density appears related to complexity (richness of localities), while contributing to turn the public realm into a public experience of a potentiality democratic diversity. But this, of course, only if ultimately the authorities in charge manage the difficult mix of control and freedom to boost creativity while not killing its creative power.

After all, heritage is always envisaged by each epochs’ driving forces and we are never sure about which are the most insightful). For Fortuna, the notion of heritage is intrinsically presentist (Fortuna, 2016: 7). So, it is up to the management of culture to create platforms for broad and comprehensive debates to deepen our knowledge of urban public spaces and broaden the possibilities for neighborhoods.

My perspective oscillates between critical positions and a pragmatic renewal perspective. I wonder how to reconcile these two valid perspectives, when deeper philosophical insights are difficult to translate into immediate planning actions; while immediate planning actions are too often fuelled by conventional ideas of the city and the needs of the people.

I just wonder where to stand, if one could ask me where to be. For in the urban scape we are challenged to face

immediate and strategic issues, within broader or tighter senses of temporality. That is no less what an architect like Siza Vieira recently demonstrated in the Venice Architecture Biennale: a value as important for any street as neighbor-ness (vizinhança), appearing as a value the urban professional and no less any citizen needs to take into consideration. For Grande and Cremascoli (2016) the mechanisms to save material heritage do exist; but not to save the immaterial heritage of people and citizen relations, as progressively conquered along history (many times painfully). It has always been a history where vicinity, tolerance and multiculturalism were not given, but fought for. For Grande and Cremascoli (2016) as arguably for Steiner, that is even the basis for any idea of Europe.

Very interestingly, these issues are difficult to appear as individual building blocks of a larger panorama; in any case it is important to remind the reader of the defining aspects of this process of Siza in Venice. It tells a lot about how a multidisciplinary and collaborative take on the territory and all its potentiality can create situations which shed light on the present, the future and the past (as a creative way to acknowledge many dimensions of the challenges implied).

Nuno Grande, the curator, tells an important tale:

Following an invitation by the Ministry of Culture of the Portuguese Government to curate the contents for the pavilion of Portugal in the 15<sup>th</sup> Architecture Biennale 2016, we decided to present a proposal which could interact directly with the physical and social fabric of that city, exposing, simultaneously, what is happening in other European ‘vicinities.’ (Grande & Cremascoli, 2016: 35)

Further, according to Grande:

Facing the impossibility of realizing the Pavilion of Portugal in the heart of the Biennale – in the space of the Giardini or the Arsenale where the country doesn’t have a fixed venue – we proposed to localize it in an expectant site in Venice, there where the Portuguese representation could contribute to interpolate the remaining Venetian neighbors. The chosen space was Campo di Marte, in the island of Giudecca, less exposed to the touristic and artistic pressures generated by the Biennale (Grande & Cremascoli, 2016: 35).

What is striking in this proposal is the fact that it originated from an unusual cooperation between local inhabitants, architects, authorities and the Italian Institute for Social Dwelling (ATER), provoking a change in the horizon: the need for the authorities to do something about the renewal of the area. What here is possibly just generating more artistic and architectural pressure in the area is always an issue, but no less important is the fact that a cohesive gesture generates a public sphere, since action provokes all sorts of reactions. Such manifestations of projectual wit may lead to the social and public acknowledgement that the city is a grammar that potentially any agent, individually or collectively, can try to deal with. In the very words of Grande, “the Portuguese participation went beyond a mere representation of architecture to appear in the public realm as a manifest on the idea of vicinity.” (Grande & Cremascoli, 2016: 35)

Arguably, there is a lot of work to be done in order to translate the exceptionality of what one learns in Venice (or an alley in Lisbon such as Travessa da Ermida – where continuous cultural activity includes artistic projects (street art interventions, public sculptures) and, most strikingly, the innovative reinterpretation of mythical public space thorough narrative thinking (Caeiro, 2014: 191), or a lost secret gem of locality as the Palácio Belmonte) into the broader reality of cities. Maybe it is the communication potential of portals – places where past and future meet without touching (Morton, 13) – that ultimately fuels the contact between distant worlds.

The narratives behind being a city-user are today as vague as they are inoperative, when not adequately put into perspective by the agents involved. Seixas (2016) who was concerned with such somehow paralyzing heteronomy, ultimately for the benefit of short-sighted cultural businesses, reminds us that cities are noteworthy accumulators of human energy (Seixas, 2016: 57) and thus our responsibility, as managers of places and carers for their vitality, is to make sure the ecosystems of locality can overcome the most hegemonic globalization industries in order for a bottom-up industry of hegemonic locality to redeem our forgotten urbanity. The ethics of the curatorial, and its care for a long terms commitment to the aesthetic of urbanity, could be a response to a situation where many spaces in the city “fall prey to exogenous, sudden and violent transformations, where a rhetoric of connectivity between the individual, territory and urbanity is absent” (Seixas, 2016: 61).

That is what art – and all the civic arts in particular – has always taught us, to learn to be surprised by the everyday landscape. Moreover: art redistributes the city, even – or better said, particularly – when it is disguised as the most humble response to local needs, the creative origin of the art of the urban. I would say that the changes needed could be grounded on the basis of a specific practice: the translation of conceptual values into living models for citizen encounters and motivating narratives.

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## *Why can't our wall paintings last forever?*

### **The creation of identity symbols of street art**

**Alice Nogueira Alves**

CIEBA/Faculdade de Belas-Artes da Universidade de Lisboa

Largo da Academia Nacional de Belas-Artes, 1249-058, Lisboa, Portugal

alicenaves@gmail.com

#### **Abstract**

The concept of ephemerality has been used in the last decades as the opposite of memory preservation. In this article, I seek to understand the valorization of street art as cultural heritage, as well as the strategies that have been adopted for its preservation in a non-institutional context.

**Keywords:** Public Space, Preservation, Authenticity, Graffiti, Cultural Heritage

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1 - This article was based on a communication held on June 16, 2016, at the Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity – International Conference, at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon. Later, a proposal for a deeper reflection on this subject came out, within the scope of the International Conference – Public Art in the Digital Creativity Era, organized by the Catholic University of Portugal – Porto, on April 28 and 29, 2017, which resulted in an article written in Portuguese titled “Efemeridade vs. memória – Novos processos de patrimonialização da street art”. Given the initial context of these reflections, an English version of the same text is published in this journal.

#### **1. Introduction**

The concept of ephemerality has been used in the last decades as the opposite of memory preservation. In fact, the first works carried out in this context intended to fight the eternalization process that is typical of museum objects. However, we have been witnessing the failure of this concept, leading to the risk of disappearance of the material memories of contemporary art, which often hides behind this principle of ephemerality because of the difficulties associated with the material preservation of its conceptual ideas.

Contemporary mural paintings, which proliferate on the walls of our cities, are an example of this reality. Whether they are done in a marginal or in an institutional context, we note that many emblematic examples, executed by internationally known artists, are gradually disappearing. These events are mirrored in newspaper news, and they are also the target of numerous comments in the internet social pages, where ideas and principles related to the concept of cultural heritage can be perceived. In some countries, legal measures have already been taken to protect works seen as symbolic by local and international communities (Schilling, 2012; Rayner, 2008).

A careful analysis of some paintings done in a marginal context, which were recognized for their artistic value at an institutional level, shows us that there are parallel processes of symbolic identification that culminate in the preservation of these paintings. Despite the non-compliance with the normal procedures used in the western context, the process of turning these elements into heritage, as well as the measures taken to preserve them, end up guaranteeing the symbolic permanence of the painting in the wall. Their value may be defined due to their existence as elements of historical memory, representing the first manifestations of graffiti in Portugal, due to their connection with important artists or, even, due to their origin as monuments erected in memory of someone who died unexpectedly. We are witnessing a process that, in its genesis, follows international definitions of the concept of cultural heritage, in which the community is responsible for identifying its symbolic elements and for their management and preservation.

## 2. Cultural heritage and identity

As we analyze the international charters, as well as the numerous publications and reflections on the subject, we witness the evolution of the concept of Cultural Heritage throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It started by the individual element valuation, attributed by a given social class, within very defined parameters, but, gradually, it opened to the concept of “good” identified by a community who enjoys it and gives it a very specific symbolic meaning related to an Identity value. We are still trying to understand the difficult resolution problems associated with this change of direction, especially in what concerns the preservation of these elements.

Among the various international regulations, we can refer to the Charter of Krakow 2000 – Principles for the Conservation and Restoration of Built Heritage, where we find the following definition:

Heritage is that complex of man’s works in which a community recognizes its particular and specific values and with which it identifies. Identification and specification of heritage is therefore a process related to the choice of values.

(The Charter of Krakow 2000)

Far from a set of previously defined attributes which dictated the values of an object granting it the status of heritage, this identification is now governed by much larger concepts, resulting in an increase of objects or events to which this status can be attributed. Cultural heritage is now seen as the reflection of a community, with the mission of taking the past to future generations, in order to explain to them their present time (Avrami et al., 2000: 10); We no longer select objects only from the past, but also those of the present. We are the ones who define what will represent us in the future, and what is the best image for our descendants to know who we once were and to understand themselves:

This state of affairs is the postmodern context, where today’s “lifestyle” is being transmuted into tomorrow’s “cultural heritage,” and it prompts the identification of a number of interesting themes that are potential sites for the invention of new heritage (Pearce, 2000: 63).

This extension of the concept and, especially, of the temporal spectrum in which these goods are to be kept, raises new questions to be solved in terms of their preservation. The interventions’ *modus operandi* has changed and will continue to evolve (Avramamon et al., 2000: 7), as does society, which values goods and has different expectations about their symbolic message. This results in an arbitrary object of interpretation and changes the criteria for an eventual restoration intervention. We mark the object with our version of the future, where it will be interpreted considering its transformations over time, and depending on the social and cultural context of those who were previously responsible for its maintenance. This valuation can be positive or negative, and it will be the resultant version of this interpretation that we will pass onto our successors, whether it may be one of preservation or of degradation (Lowenthal, 2000: 23).

According to François Hartog (2006), this urgency to safeguard as many elements from our presence as we can, as if we were afraid of losing our collective memory, or even our individual one, is the result of a confusion of times. In fact, this vertigo in taking measures for the preservation of the objects that represent us may be related to the rapid social and technological evolution of the last decades. “The past has become much closer and the future is tomorrow” (Alves, 2014: 22).

Gradually we are witnessing the appearance of new types of heritage, designated as “Emerging Heritage” by Marie Berducou (2013), including industrial, technical and scientific heritage, in which contemporary art should also be integrated.

The preservation of contemporary works of art is not a recent concern. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when technological practices began to change, artists have been expressing their concern about the maintenance of their works. Duchamp himself is a good example of this. Despite the apparent contradiction in his production methods there is a reflection on this subject, which led to the use of more durable materials and techniques (Pohlad, 2000). On the other hand, the dematerialization of art has caused several problems in its preservation, not only because of the prevalence of the concept over the form, but also because of the poor quality of its materials.

As ephemeral art seeks a transient state, a birth and a death, it opposes itself to the concept of a museum object, for which preservation is a top priority – as if the piece could become

“frozen” for the enjoyment of future generations (Alves, 2014: 22). However, and despite these creators’ will, we often see objects of ephemeral art entering this “institution”, even with the permission of the artist, and this new framework creates numerous problems for those responsible for their preservation within the Museum.

Recently, street art has joined this group. Its multiplication throughout the streets of the city, as well as its symbolic importance within a marginal group, results in the assignment of new values that led to the development of many studies, with contributions from various areas. In a different paper, we established a parallelism with the principles enumerated by David Throsby (2000: 29). At the time, we highlighted the aesthetic value, related to the development of a new taste, identified by new generations; the spiritual value, attributed through the symbolic identification of the elements that are represented and the messages they carry; the social value, through which a connection with the “other” is made and a sense of identity can be found; and the symbolic value, because it reflects a generation’s sense of identity (Alves, 2014). This last aspect results in a historical valuation within the group, as we will see later.

The ease with which the image of these artistic manifestations circulates in the virtual world results in a new aesthetic taste diffusion, defining new contemporary artistic movements that, when separated from the marginality, enter the art market, where they end up achieving the status of an artistic object and, thus, acquire an economic value.

By achieving this status, the ephemerality of these objects becomes an abstract concept. In fact, the very identification of these objects as perennial can raise questions. Fernando Saavedra advocates that:

El carácter efímero que se asigna al graffiti de modo general es una convención social heredera del concepto de infamia y que se proyecta, hoy por hoy, para fortalecer esa férrea dicotomía entre arte de calle y museo-mercado del arte. (The ephemeral character attributed to graffiti in general is a social convention inheriting the concept of infamy and it is projected, today, to strengthen that iron dichotomy between street art and the museum-art market.) (Saavedra, 2015: 10).

Concealed behind this question, the lack of responsibility for the preservation of street art prevails.

However, identity bonds quickly begin to develop leading

to the need for the preservation of street art. We come to regard these elements of street art as our patrimony, and, by becoming symbols of our identity, they cannot be in any way devalued. On the other hand, within the very hierarchical “graffiti community”, there is an overvaluation of certain individuals, as leaders or as representatives of the first manifestations of this type of artistic expression in Portugal, leading to the exaltation and desire for permanence of their testimonies, of their contributions to the definition of the city image.

This different approach in the process of valuing our assets is explained by Ulpiano Meneses. This author draws attention to the multiplicity of values attributable to a monument. Not only from the point of view of those who change over time (Alves, s.d.), but in the different values given by those who enjoy a different aspect of this same heritage, at the same time. In fact, the way we interact with a monument is different when it is part of our day-to-day life, our history, our identity, or when we are the “other” who visits it, who comes from outside and who will understand it, obviously, in a different way (Meneses, 2010). This question is fundamental to understand the reflections that will be presented next.

There are two possible approaches regarding street art. On the one hand, we have an institutionalized point of view, on the other, a marginal one. The first case and some of the strategies that have been developed all over the world, have already been studied previously (Alves, 2014), although our approach lacks an obvious and necessary update – if we go through the internet pages, we will find new interventions for the protection of contemporary mural painting that have been carried out everywhere, everyday. As for the marginal question, there is still much to understand. The close observation of the reality that surrounds us, as well as the contributions and opinions that we can find on the internet, are essential tools for the social study of contemporary communities. This allows us to make some reflections of extreme relevance for the modern understanding of the concept of heritage and open a way to the acceptance of other non-institutionalized models of preservation.

### **3. Different ways of safeguarding identity symbols**

Despite the marginal character of the “graffiti community”, within which there are special rules and code systems, studied by anthropologists (Campos, 2010), and through the analysis of paintings that have been maintained (or not) and

the reactions aroused by these processes, we can perceive the existence of a tendency for the preservation of paintings considered as symbolic by the community.

Actually, and despite the fact that the ephemeral character of these paintings is absolutely evident and accepted by all, when some symbols begin to be at risk, we see the creation of movements to defend them or to lament their disappearance (when it is already too late). In some cases, we can observe their preservation in situ or their continuous symbolic re-creation. Far from the ethical principles around the preservation of an ephemeral work of art (Gay, 2015: 99) which dictate the work of professionals in conservation and restoration, in this case the community takes up the responsibility of maintaining its own symbols.

This type of identification is related to the contemporary definition of heritage mentioned before. In this case, the community identifies its symbolic/patrimonial elements, and manages its preservation. This process is accelerated because the generations succeed one another very quickly, since this is a predominantly juvenile movement.

In this paper, I reflect on three distinct valuation processes. The first is related to a historical memory that justifies the community's identity.

A good example of this is the well-known boy, or "snotty boy" from the Amoreiras hall of fame in Lisbon. This painting was made in 1996 by Uber and has lasted until the present day, something that is extraordinary in this context. Around it everything changes, the wall is painted and repainted, but there, in that corner, the figure of a child's face is always present and marks the identity of the city. The layers of paint overlap one another, preserving the older paintings underneath, away from our eyes, but keeping the memory of this artistic movement in our country.

This piece is important because it was carried out by an element of the first "generation" of Portuguese graffitiers, in a non-institutionalized context, and it was intended as a social criticism of the economic center existing in that area of the city. On the other hand, it is one of the first Portuguese portraits painted in this way (some claim that it is the first).

Although there were changes in the elements around the boy's face, until 2010, the original image was kept. Only in April that year was it covered. This event caused a great impression on the community. Because of this, the first recreation, in a different version, the Ranhoso v.2.1 (Snotty

boy v. 2.1), was also performed that month, accompanied by praise for its original author. On the internet we can find a testimony left by the authors of this second version, dated April 23, 2010:

OUR TRIBUTE TO OUR TRIBE. and friends.

O RANHOSO V.2.1

Uber painted this kid face more or less 14 years ago.... Amoreiras Wall. Many many people had paint in this wall and always had respect or some kind of special feeling on this kid face. also respect for the writer...more or less one month ago it was crossed with a throw-up! ;( and after that more writers went over the spot... normal. Painting don't last forever... we know that and that's why we take pictures! but in the last 2 years we have been losing part of our culture.... so many cleaned walls.... Ice-Tea, Abraço, BAIRRO ALTO..... and..... "o Ranhoso". for many of us this was a masterpiece stopped in time. cross overs I understand! in the bombing mode or it the fame mode.... and they are different. In a place like Amoreiras if you go Over some painting you must do it BETTER AND BIGGER!!! we made our tribute..... "O RANHOSO" v.2.1 and the most amazing was that when we were painting there were common people coming to us and sending real props and telling that they were missing that kid..... he was always there not only for the graffiti community but for all Lisbon... a SYMBOL. RANHOSOS É O QUE SOMOS! ;) Respect History and ..... Make it Real ..... MAKE IT ALIVE. BIG BIG UP ARM we ARE (ARM, 2010)

In this text, we can identify several elements that fit perfectly into the concept of heritage, and we verify the historical importance of this painting within the graffiti community, as well as within the city.

After this event, the painting was painted over again by an unknown person, taking the original artist back to the wall, 15 years later, to make a new version of the little boy who had been inspired by the cover of a magazine in the nineties.

Later, the painting was covered with the figure of a new boy. This time in a modernized version, holding a spray can. However, this version did not please the community, and after a short time, Aspen reconstituted the "Snotty boy" again, in the version that we can still observe. There are no

visual records of other actions between these two paintings, but this hypothesis should not be discarded.

Although the original painting was not kept, the theme remains. Failing to recover the original materiality of the object, the community took care of the preservation of its symbolism on the same wall, guaranteeing the existence of this identity element, at that emblematic site.

Another example of the cultural importance given to this type of art was shown in the reactions to the disappearance of a Hazul Luzah painting. In this case, there is a valorization of the artist that begins at the final moment of his work (Diógenes, 2013), painted three years earlier. Due to the initiatives of the Municipality of Porto, in 2013, this painting was “erased” with yellow paint (Martins, 2013). This practice was generalized in the city, but it was not exclusive of this place, or even of our country. In Brazil these actions were the target of much criticism.

In the present case, the act was photographed and published on the web pages by the author himself, leading to a great debate about the difference between art and vandalism (Diógenes, 2015: 691). Again, in addition to the sentence later written in the same place: “Aqui morava um “grafito”. Que descanse em paz” (Here lived a “grafito”. May it rest in peace), we find other comments on the internet, where the concept of cultural heritage can be perceived, as mentioned before, in a general way.

Primeiro apagam o Hazul  
Depois, a memória,  
A seguir, a liberdade  
E por fim, a cidade

First they delete the Hazul  
After, the memory,  
Next, the freedom  
At last, the city

(A Agulha Inquieta)

In 2016, the artist painted that wall again to celebrate the third anniversary of the first painting’s disappearance. Although the theme is not the same, we witness a symbolic identification of the place.

There is a different case we may identify, which is the one

related to a painting done in memory of the prematurely deceased MS Snake, by Sam the Kid in Chelas / Lisboa. This death has been shrouded in controversy, and for this reason this work remains in place, and is respected by the community. We could attribute an intentional memory value to this painting, according to Riegl’s definitions of 1903 (2013), because, in this case, the goal is to keep the original image related to a specific event.

The other important aspect, which we can also find in this theorist, is related to the issue of degradation. In fact, as ancient works displease recent manifestations, in contemporary works degradation is understood as neglect (Riegl, 2013). For this reason, when we approach contemporary art, we always hope that it is as if it had just come out of the artist’s hands. That’s why we tend to stop the natural evolution of the works over time, fighting against their natural degradation, and thus “...modern murals may be in danger of being permanently caught in the present” (Brajer, 2010: 94).

#### 4. Authenticity questions

All these questions, which result from the repainting and re-creation of the pieces, can raise problems related to their authenticity, considering the Western meaning of this term. This concept is still being discussed by several people, and it led, at some point, to the definitions found in the Nara Document of 1994. This international charter is entirely dedicated to issues related to authenticity, marking the cultural diversity that all sought to highlight at the time. It defines the end of a universal heritage concept. In fact, it was concluded that different communities identify and value their monuments differently, and there can be no single way of intervening to ensure their preservation. It is necessary to perceive which are the most valued aspects, and what gives them their symbolic character – their authenticity – to justify their preservation and transition for future generations. In Western societies we tend to favor the work’s original material, but in the East the image is more valued. When we define our preservation strategies, these aspects always restrict us.

Isabelle Brajer defends that the adaptation of this concept to contemporary art is based on new values: shape and design, location and settlement, use and function, as well as spirit and feeling. According to the same author, other issues contribute to the overestimation of the image. On the

one hand, the fact that the works are often not executed by their own authors, on the other, the aggressiveness of external conditions, which accelerate the original materials' degradation (Brajer, 2007: 94).

We may conclude that the evolution of the referred heritage concept had repercussions in the alteration of our concepts of restoration and preservation, opening space to a more multicultural vision. Several types of preservation strategies, related to the way patrimonial objects are identified by each community, and their authenticity criteria (Jokilehto, 2006), are now being accepted.

## 5. Final remarks

The patrimonial identification of the symbolic elements of a given community seems to be an intrinsic process. Also in this context, apart from what is happening in the institutional context, preservation strategies are created by elements of those communities with the aim of keeping their identity memories alive. In this case study, and taking into account that the price of a professional intervention is a problem, this is usually done by the works' original authors or by the local community. Thus, it often results in complete repainting or aesthetic updates (Shank, Norris, 2008: 12), which can reflect the constant evolution of the community that may consider the original work as outdated (Weber, 2004).

Several authors argue that the preservation of these artistic manifestations is accomplished by digital means, but that does not seem to apply in these cases, where the importance of the original site prevails over all other factors, being fundamental for their symbolic perception. In the case of the boy, the work is located in an emblematic place in the community's history, and on one of the main roads that access the city, where many people pass by daily. The location of the painting in memory of MS Snake, which is in a very wide space, allows us to see it from a long distance and from several different places, reinforcing its awesomeness and the impression that it gives us, and it also defines the physiognomy of the place.

It is evident that this type of artistic expression has a meaning in its original location, being decontextualized in the photograph, where there is an obvious limitation of the impression that can be perceived in the street (Sanchis, 2015: 4).

The physical removal of pieces of street art and their transition to a museology context, as a form of preservation, have also been carried out in many situations. This type of procedure breaks the link between the art and the life of the place where it is located, where there is a relationship that gives it meaning (Bengtson, 2016: 423). In fact, through the analyzed examples, we identify an undiscussed will in the permanence of the symbolic object in its original location.

On the other hand, as a protest against the gentrification of sites, as well as against the removal and sale of street art pieces without the permission of the authors, we also witness a process of painting overlaying carried out by the creators themselves. This is what happened on two occasions with the artist Blu, in Berlin and in Cologne, where he covered paintings as a means of setting a position (Cordero, 2015). In this case, the author himself determined the end of his work (although it continues to exist under the monochromatic repainting).

## Acknowledgements

The author thanks Pedro Soares Neves for all the shared information which made the concretization of these reflections possible.

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## Negotiating the tangible and the intangible: A case for street art festivals

**Aparajita Bhasin**

Independent Researcher - India

aparajita.bhasin@gmail.com

### Abstract

Street art in the past decade or so has witnessed development in the form of the street art festivals that have sprung up across the globe. These festivals bring artists, street art enthusiasts, art historians, and the public together in the celebration and creation of street art. Practicing art in this format can arguably be seen as replacing the art institutions that often attempt to represent and commercially engage with this art, thus proving to be antithetical to its systems. Street art is characterised by an inherent contradiction that lies within it – while on one hand it is tangible due to its unregulated availability to people for aesthetic experience, both visually and physically, it is also intangible due to its ephemerality and unstructured manner of recording history. This article makes a case for street art festivals as representation of what may be called a ‘Street art world,’ that allows for documentation and reflection of the art movement that began in the late 1960s and the 1970s.

**Keywords:** Street Art Festivals, Street Art World, Institutional Theory, Intangible, New Media

### 1. Introduction

Street art has achieved significant success in the form of street art festivals internationally. This boom has been recorded formally and observed personally by art professionals as well as the public. The most popular and well-studied art festivals are music festivals, while academic study in the field of street art festivals is scarce. Studying street art festivals is important as it reflects the growing popularity of the genre in its natural habitat – the street. The art work is created, perceived, and slowly perishes in the environment from which it derives its meaning. Context is the crucial aspect here, where distinct rules apply to any work on the street, and it could accordingly be painted over or washed off.

Street art is a genre created for the people. Bringing art to the streets makes it available to all equally and the interaction between the artwork, the place, and the viewer is paramount. The relationship of street art with galleries and the attempts of galleries and museums to institutionalise street art within the dominant culture of the art world are often found to be incompatible with each other. This incompatibility is reflected in the dual nature of street art; it is tangible due to

its unregulated access to people for aesthetic experience, both visually and physically, but it is also intangible due to its ephemerality and unstructured manner of recording history. Does this incompatibility between the two indicate the existence of a ‘street art world’ that exists in its own right, as symbolised by street art festivals?

The institutional theory of art assumes the ‘fine art world’ as its focal point for the discussion of art and the institutions that represent them. When it comes to street art, it becomes essential to understand what can be defined as street art and what does not fall within the category in order to fairly discuss the dynamics of an art form that is essentially understood as something that exists outside the culture of institutional representation. Street art is commonly understood as an evolution from the graffiti writing culture from the 1960s-1970s US. While graffiti is a type base art form that can range from a simple tag to a complicated piece, street art is considered a more visual/figurative movement. Today’s street art culture includes the practices of graffiti depicted in works of artists like Bond who mostly creates complex pieces of his tag. Riggle (2010) explains that for a work of art to be called street art it is important that the street forms an

important part of the work whether materially or artistically, and its mere placement on the street cannot be considered a legitimate factor in deeming it a work of street art.

Street art over the past decade has evolved and gained a lot of popularity and consequently attracted a lot of attention from the institutional art world, the so-called gatekeepers of art and style, and brings commerce and money along for the ride (Reed et al., 2011). These aspects of the art world are represented by institutions like galleries, museums, auction houses, fairs and festivals, which are run by a niche group of museum curators, critics, journalists and historians. The discussion of galleries and museums with regard to street art is important at this stage therefore, as they are considered to be the upholders of the art theory that legitimises a given work as art within the institutional art world.

Street art uses its environment as an essential tool to create meaning. Whether materially or contextually, the painting derives its meaning from the urban space it occupies as a way of socio-political commentary or for beautification. On the other hand, our understanding of artworks that are displayed within a museum setting is heavily influenced by the physical, moral, intellectual and economic conditions inherent in the museums themselves (Brettell, 2006). Moreover, a work of street art is created to be experienced at a glance, the practice of looking at a work for long periods of time and contemplation are not necessarily expected of the viewer. The norms of creating and viewing artworks for the gallery and for the urban environment are opposed to one another.

## **2. Commissioned street artworks**

Art created in the public realm, whether commissioned or uncommissioned, is often subject to censorship and action by governing bodies or upholders of aesthetic value. In 2011, as a part of the Art in the Streets exhibition held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the curators of the exhibition invited the Italian artist BLU to paint a mural on the north wall of Geffen Contemporary. The artist painted a field of military-style coffins draped by large dollar bills instead of flags. On the mural's completion, the curator deemed the work inappropriate (Finkel, 2010) and it was painted over. The reasoning given for this was that the mural was directly in front of the "Go for Broke Monument, which commemorates the heroic roles of Japanese American

soldiers..." and that it was situated near a veterans affairs building (Bengtson, 2015: 118). Its clear anti-war message was perceived to be offensive, though the meaning and relevance of the work was implicit in its location due to these very reasons. Moreover, the curators should have expected a work on similar lines as the artist's reputation for making political murals could not have been hidden from them (Bengtson, 2015). This incident was heavily criticised by members of both the art world and the street art community on grounds of censorship and as a reflection of the quality of the exhibition itself. Although the mural was documented photographically and featured in the exhibition catalogue, the essence of the actual work in its designated environment could not have been captured. It was especially controversial for the street art community as it was a commissioned work and not an act of vandalism and yet was 'buffed.' This act was a fitting meta-commentary on the actual conditions of doing art in the streets (Bengtson, 2015).

But, since the rise of popularity of street art, many municipalities and other governing bodies have invited street artists and street art festivals to be held in their city, on the grounds of boosting the cultural value of the district while also helping the economy, even if it is temporary. Such an act can be viewed as an attempt at gentrification, a quick fix for problems that were ignored for long. When street art is created with the support of local authorities that exercise influence or censorship to modify the content of the artwork, should it still be called street art? It is important to ponder whether these creations would be better termed as public art or murals.

## **3. Removal and sale of street art**

Galleries have on many occasions attempted to represent street art in multiple ways, be it for commercial purposes in galleries or as retrospectives in museums. They have encountered the inherent paradox in the museumisation of an art form that specifically came about as an alternative to the institutional setting. They have endeavoured to represent works of art by street artists in the form of replicas or prints of art works made on the street and by removing works of art from the streets and physically bringing them into the gallery space. The removal of work from the streets is particularly controversial as the context within which a work is created is changed. It loses its meaning derived from the 'street'.

With growing popularity of street art among the public and art professionals, auction houses like Christies and Sotheby's have, since 2007, included studio works by street artists. This new market with new age commercial platforms like eBay soon began selling works taken off from walls and brought into private collections. This practice is heavily criticised by artists. French artist Invader comments on the removal of graffiti:

If it is because [they don't] like it, that's ok. If it is to sell it on eBay or to put it in [their] living room, that does not make me happy. Street pieces are made for the street and for the people in the street to enjoy them (Bengtson, 2016).

The removal of a piece of concrete on which an artist has painted and bringing it into the museum is derived from the basic idea of preservation of the artwork. But when this is done, the artwork will not run its natural course of ephemerality and hence, it is directly antithetical to the ethos of street art. Similar concerns have been voiced by street artists like Invader and British artist Eine, who talks about not signing his street artwork so that it cannot be authenticated and hence cannot be sold. This view is also reflected in the comments by Chris Ford, the managing director of Lazarides gallery, when he says that the art works should stay on the streets as the work is considered a gift to the city (Interview by the author). Notwithstanding these strong views, when street art is removed and placed within a museum or gallery or in the collection of a private dealer, the loss of context heavily compromises the meaning and value of street art. This demonstrates a state of tension between street art and the institutional context.

#### **4. Exclusion from galleries**

The idea of exhibiting this visual aspect of the street culture in commercial galleries is not a new one, and began early on with the exhibition of works by various graffiti artists in 1980s as an attempt to increase acceptability. This was also captured in the seminal film on graffiti writing, *Style Wars*, with the exhibition of studio works by graffiti writers. Today, the exhibition of street art or studio works by street artists is not common practice, yet one can observe an increase in the number of museums seeking to display street art works to represent this increase in popularity and to historicise the practice since the 2000s. The first exhibition that included works by street artists was *Spank the Monkey*, held at

the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, in 2006. This was followed by the Street Art exhibition at Tate Modern, London, which displayed works of street artists on the iconic Bankside façade of the gallery facing the Thames, but did not culminate in the inclusion of any on the inside, as a part of the permanent collection. Steve Lazarides, a pioneer in urban art, offered to donate studio works by street artists to the Tate to include in their collection and thence the art historical narrative, but this offer was refused by the gallery. Another exhibition dedicated to present a historical perspective in the growth of the movement was *Art in the Streets*, held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles in 2011.

All these exhibitions attempted to trace the evolution of graffiti and street art to their current state, like a retrospective. But they were a reflection and a result of the popularity of the genre, temporarily legitimising the movement. They never assimilated the works within the narratives of the art movements that preceded street art. The institutional engagement with street art has been from the perspective of the formal art world but not in terms of what the street represents. The inclusion of art works by street artists in exhibitions reflects the popularity of the movement but, at the same time, their removal for sale reflects economic considerations as well as the desire to collect artworks. Where it has been museumised, street art has again been approached from the point of view of the institution and not the art form.

#### **5. The virtual platform**

Explicit and implicit acts of censorship and appropriation have led many artists to condone the actions of the institutions. The growing popularity of street art and the growth of social media has created a virtual museum for street art; any new work that is created by an artist finds its repository. In many instances, street artists use the street purely as a medium to create art and do not necessarily place the work at the most strategic location. The aim is often to capture the work and find an audience over the internet. The life of the art work itself becomes longer than it would have been on the street when compared to its digital life. In cases where the context and siting of the work are important, a binary-coded viewing on the internet drastically changes the experience. This leads to the question of why street artists agree with the disassociation of their work from its siting and context

in one instance, but do not do so when the work itself is removed from the location sometimes to be displayed within an institution.

The destruction of the work is inevitable whether by natural causes or by human intervention by painting over it. The answer to this question is reflected in the actions of the Italian artist BLU, who in March 2016 removed almost all his murals from the streets of Bologna. This took place as a response to an exhibition held at Palazzo Pepoli, called *Street Art: Banksy & Co.: Art in the Urban Form* from March 18–June 26, 2016. The exhibition displayed about 250 street art works, among which were many artworks by artists like Banksy, BLU, Dado and Rusty that were removed from the streets to be displayed in the gallery. The exhibition was organised for the purpose of salvaging them from demolition and preserving them from the injuries of time (Ming, 2016). Explaining his act of protest in a statement published by the Wu Ming foundation, BLU said:

After having denounced and criminalised graffiti as vandalism, after having oppressed the youth culture that created them, after having evacuated the places which functioned as laboratories for those artists, now Bologna's powers-that-be pose as the saviors of street art (Ming, 2016).

BLU goes on to comment on the appropriation of the art works, which would legitimize the hoarding of art off the street according to him (Cascone, 2016), and stresses the need to fight a model based on private accumulation that commodifies life and creativity for the profits of the usual few people (Ming, 2016). For this, he responds by removing paintings from the streets to snatch them from those claws and to make hoarding impossible (Ming, 2016). The internet as a medium, on the other hand, democratizes the experience. This is reflected in the views of Steven Harrington and Jaime Rojo, who talk about the ability of the internet to make artists virtually stateless and point out that the unbound and chaotic nature of digital communications feels more organic and trustworthy (Reed et al., 2011).

The above discussion demonstrates the antagonistic relationship that street art shares with galleries and museums, revealing street art as a non-institutionalisable art form; street artists and enthusiasts show no indication towards a need for such assimilation with art institutions.

## 6. Street art festivals

Street art festivals are a very recent development in the history of street art and have therefore, not been studied academically. Apart from some texts published by festival organisers such as Nuart festival in Norway, namely *Eloquent Vandals: A History of Nuart Festival* (Reed et al., 2011) there is not much literature available to gain a deeper insight into the functioning and reception of the festivals.

The street culture/Hip-Hop culture that came about in the 1960s-1970s, showed interdisciplinary traits with the crossover of music, art and social gatherings, as described by Chris Ford (interview with the author). This seems to be the general ethos of street art festivals that also celebrate aspects of its predecessor-graffiti and all other aspects that were practiced along with it.

Street art festivals are focussed on the practice and promotion of this culture, where artists from all over the world gather to create art, make music and put up performances for a specific venue or a city. This practice has become widespread in the past decade with resemblance to a music festival more than a visual arts fair, where the paintings and other forms of street interventions can be seen as a performative act for the celebration of a genre. Important examples of such festivals are the NuArt festival held at Stavanger, Norway, Meeting of Styles, held in various locations across the world like London, Denmark and San Francisco, See No Evil, Bristol and St+Art festival at Delhi and Mumbai to name a few.

Organisers of street art festivals want to stay true to the ethics of the art form, which is reflected in the freedom accorded to an artist during a festival which is organised either independently by using methods like crowdfunding, by procuring artistic grants, or by collaborating with government bodies. The extent of freedom is questionable when the festival is funded or partnered by a government body. Yet, maintaining the integrity of the art form is important to most festival organisers. Such an attitude is reflected in the views of Martyn Reed, curator of the NuArt festival, who describes how the festival has abandoned the use of the term 'Curator' or to 'curate' as they are associated with the aspect of preservation, which is antithetical to the essence of street art. Instead he addresses himself as a type of 'ambivalent

mutated curator' whose task it is to simply watch the work degrade over time (Reed et al., 2011). Examples that reflect the changing attitude towards street art can be seen in the painting of the old Juvenile and Magistrates' Courts as a part of the See No Evil festival in Bristol where the same artists were tried a decade ago for their street works and the painting of the façade of the Police Headquarters as a part of the St+Art Festival held in New Delhi in 2014. A portrait of Gandhi, more than 150 ft. tall, was painted - an ironic display of the tense relationship between street artists and the law enforcement body. Such examples only make the practice of street art within the festival structure more powerful in communicating with the audience through art in the public space.

## 7. Conclusion

The dialectic nature of street art creates an interesting paradox. Its material tangibility clashes with its historical intangibility. The movement has been around for over 40 years, and there have been few attempts at historicising it, let alone successfully placing it in a narrative; this is reflected in the refusal of the Tate Modern in admitting studio works by street artists to their permanent collection.

Street art is, a lot of times, appropriated by institutions for their personal advantage where the removal of the artwork is not essential, but is harmful to the meaning of street art as can be observed in the instance of BLU removing his work from the street. In 2014, he painted over his murals in Berlin as they were being used for advertising by a real estate company at Cuvrybrache and he did not want to have his art being used for this re-valorisation of the lot (Akkermann, 2015).

The removal of street art from the streets for trade is considered problematic and antithetical to the ethos of graffiti and street art (Ross, 2015). But in this case, the artist's removal of his own work was ethical for the genre. These attempts by BLU to stop the institutionalisation of his artwork have resulted him in taking away his art from the public as well, for whom it was created originally. Not all artists respond to the institutional control of street art in a similar way. Instead artists and art professionals have often voiced their opinion and their disapproval of such practices.

Academic attention to this art form has been forthcoming in the recent past, and the role of the street art festival in

bringing this about is undeniable. Street art's incompatibility with existing art institutions is evident from the scenario where the art form has gone decades without being formally documented. With the rise of the internet and new media, street art catalogues have been created informally by the supporters of art through platforms like Instagram, and formally by street art enthusiasts that culminate in websites like the Global Street Art and the Google Cultural Institute featuring street art. While these developments are crucial for the longevity and the outreach of the movement, the role of street art festivals in the history of street art cannot be ignored. A festival can be looked at as a marker of success and celebration, which permanently records the proceedings of the festival making it traceable to a particular place, time and a particular people. It reflects upon contemporary tastes and serves as a statement of critique in the work's political, socio-economic, and aesthetic environment. It draws in not just an audience and artists, but also those critical of the practice and hence a response – whether positive or negative – thereby creating an academic footprint so to speak, enabling a review of the current trends.

From an art historian's perspective, this exciting new phase in the evolution of street art and graffiti, which is probably the beginning of the institutionalisation of a street art world, has led to a moment that calls for an in-depth study of this festival format.

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## From post-graffiti to contemporary mural art: The evolution of conservation criteria

**Elena García Gayo**

Conservator

Observatorio de Arte Urbano

elenagayo@gmail.com

### Abstract

Works of art in public spaces are part of a type of art adrift because, throughout their existence, they face different attempts of appropriation. From the first instance of sales of graffiti in international fairs like ARCO to their involuntary arrival at auction houses, all of these intermediate actions can be understood as attempts at conservation, since there is a system of assessment in which their ephemeral nature is more questionable than their need for survival. This change of approach also influences the different self-organized artistic approaches that have given way to commissioned works of art, due to the professionalization of artistic activity, which has given rise to a legal change in works of art and, therefore, in the possibilities of their transcendence.

**Keywords:** Street art, Graffiti, Murals, Conservation, Criteria, Restoration

### 1. Introduction

The aim of this study is not to speak of the evolution of street art, since, although it does exist, it is not correct to address contemporary muralism as a direct evolution of street art, nor is that the objective of the present study. It is rather to focus on the legal allowances that mark popular works of art developed in public spaces and, above all, on the criteria that permit their chance of survival, which is intimately linked to their ownership and, finally, to their acceptance.

### 2. Methodology

This paper is part of a study on the evolution of the conservation of popular art in public spaces, which, in principle, have no institutional protection, but have come to be retained, even if it is in precarious ways. The methodology applied is based on the analysis of the criteria required for their conservation. The first experiences, from Keith Haring murals in Pisa and Melbourne, to the repainted graffiti of Nekst in New York, or the restoration of the signature of Muelle in Madrid, are benchmarks of three different types of conservation.

On the one hand, the recovery of works recognized within the world of contemporary art and by the imposing personality of its author. On the other hand, the repainting of works, which, although they can never be considered technically as a restoration in itself, undeniably quickly recovers the lost image, allowing the nearby environment to pay homage to its 'idol' and to ensure its survival as a sentimental approach. Finally, the restoration of a work based on the agreement of all parties legally bound and through a social collective.

### 3. Criteria for the conservation of popular 20C heritage

To speak of the conservation of some pieces of street art or graffiti does not mean to create a difference to the rest of cultural heritage, since every product of human activity can come to be recognized as cultural or artistic heritage, because they all possess codes and values that time grants them. Therefore, although the works are considered as subcultural or countercultural, they are nevertheless cultural initiatives even though they might have arisen as a reaction to official initiatives. This cultural heritage changes and settles in society through different channels; the use of tattoos serves as an example, as they have gone through an opening up process throughout time.

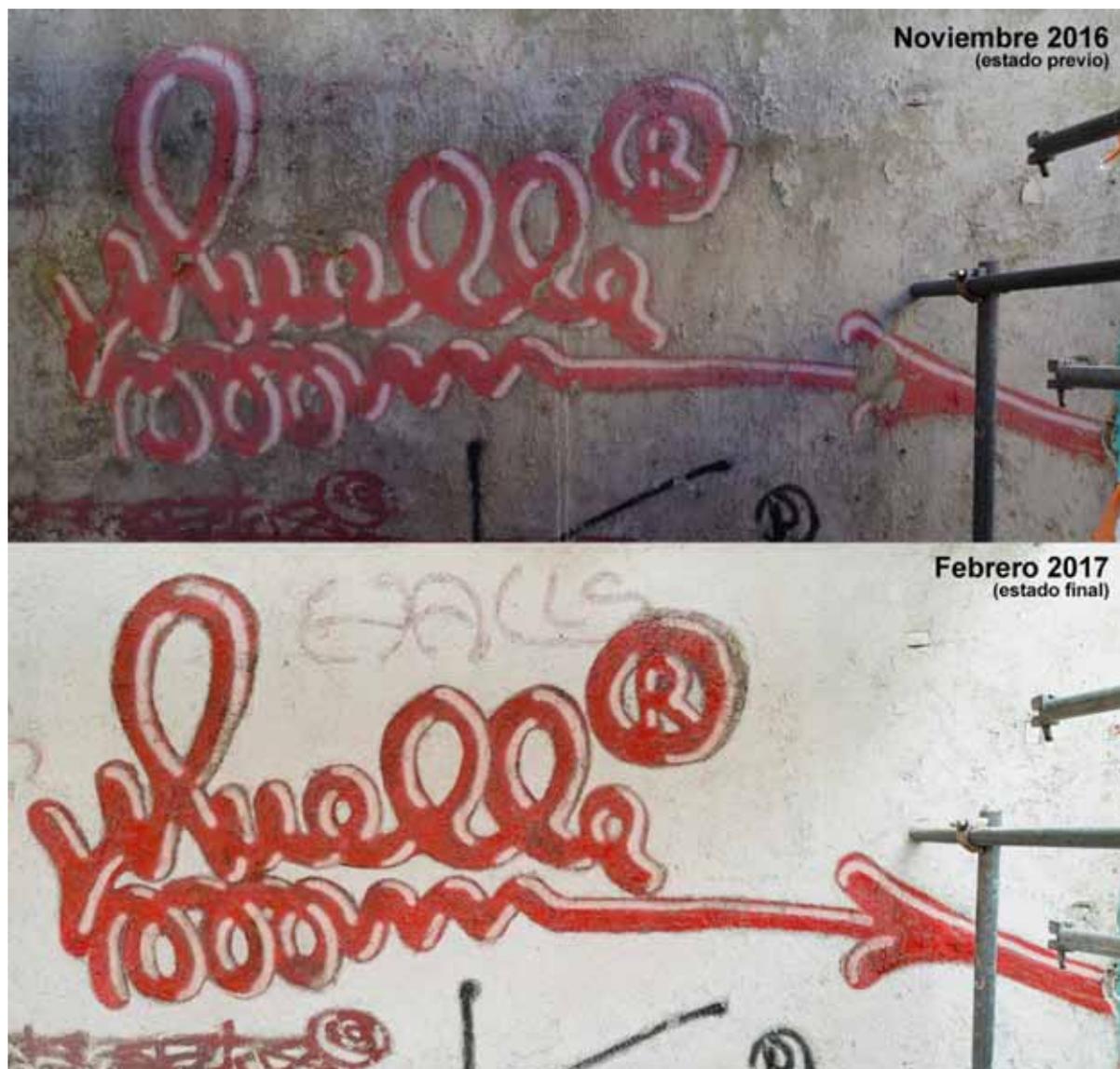


Fig 1. Restoration of the signature of Muelle in Madrid.  
Nov. 2016 before and Feb. 2017 after. Photos by ESCRBC

To facilitate the study of criteria for conservation intervention, it is advisable to start from the definition of various urban art forms, without stopping to define graffiti, which focuses on artistic manifestations developed in public spaces. From proposals suggested by various authors, these are chosen:

**3.1. Proto Street Art:** It takes as reference the first manifestations and first uses of the urban environment as a place for artistic experience (Schacter, 2017);

**3.2. Street Art:** It focuses on artistic manifestations that give a media leap and move into auction houses and galleries, creating a confusing game between street art and conceptual and contemporary art;

**3.3. Contemporary Interventions and contemporary murals:** Many of these works are of a gigantic scale, in which artists are recognized as such and the works are commissioned.

The work of the Street Art group of the International Institute for Conservation of Spain has been based in these above-mentioned differences (García Gayo, 2017). It has been decided that for works to be preserved they must be recognized as legal, since in that case, both ownership and intellectual property are recognized. They are either commissioned productions, or, on the contrary, the public interest in the pictorial layer is recognized, regardless of considerations on ownership of the support.

#### 4. Ephemeral art for a century

Ephemeral art has an expiration date, but all materials used in art are ephemeral if special care is not applied to them. That temporary quality is variable and applies, essentially, to works that are abandoned to their fate. In these cases, and as a result of that abandonment, these artistic works are recognized by an environment of people superior to that of their creation, and some of these groups come to represent a huge and heterogeneous collective of people. Therefore, the disappearance of works that come to be recognized as ephemeral should be slowed down. Our goal should be to achieve their material integrity and legibility, at least while the generation that created them is alive. And this is already a difficult task, given the challenges faced due to the weather and outdoor environment constraints these works of art endure.

#### 6. Conservation under pretext and responsibility

In this case, it is not about casual conservation, which is defined by the condition of the wall, nor about the works being unnoticed and converted into invisible objects. It is a conscious conservation in which the most important issue is the reason for their conservation. The objectives can be artistic, economic, curatorial, social or sentimental causes (Muñoz Viñas Teoría, 2004) in which case the responsibility of the previously cited reasons can emphasize this second part of the analysis and can give raise to the possibility of conservation from an institutional perspective that might not exist without any of the previously mentioned points and whose objective is education about its conservation as cultural heritage.

#### 5. Conclusion

The parameters on which the conservation of street art and graffiti could be based are petition, sensitivity and intergenerational respect for points of view that have been unintentionally encountered, and that through the conservation of artistic productions, arrive at being considered generational milestones that exceed their natural environment.

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## Historical dissemination of graffiti art

**David Novak**

University of Malaya, Cultural Centre,  
Level 2, Old Canseleri Building, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
graffitiartmalaysia@yahoo.com

### Abstract

Historical analysis is performed on the five decades old urban phenomenon represented in “graffiti art”. The article first traces the dissemination of graffiti art from New York City to the Western world in the 1980s. Individual dissemination channels represented in gallery exhibitions, cultural media and interpersonal contact are highlighted. Further, the dissemination of graffiti art in the 1990s to Central and Eastern Europe is demonstrated on the case of Czechoslovakia. Finally, the article summarises information on the dissemination of graffiti art to the rest of the world. It is argued that the production of graffiti art works on exteriors of trains became an orthodox tradition of the graffiti art culture in the 1970s and disseminated together with graffiti art forms average scales to other areas of the world. A diagram representing the Origins, Dissemination Channels and Other Conditions relating to the spread of graffiti art is presented.

**Keywords:** History; Graffiti Art; Dissemination; New York; Milestones; Train

### 1. Introduction

The technical term “graffiti art” refers to graffiti practice, which produces four visual forms (genres): tags, pieces, characters and throw-ups. There is a need to approach graffiti art history through academic research to transfer knowledge about this global form of public expression. The present article attempts to provide an overview of the available information on this topic from various resources and provides additional analysis. This might be needed in order to understand the fine nuances of this current global practice.

The article first states the origins of graffiti art and subsequently introduces the main channels responsible for the dissemination of graffiti art from New York City to the Western world in the first half of the 1980s. The article further continues to trace the transmission of graffiti art until the late 1980s and a case study shows the spread of graffiti art to Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s. Further, the mobility of young people is discussed as an informal channel responsible for the spread of graffiti art to new territories. The final section of the article introduces graffiti art as a worldwide phenomenon in other global territories and discusses the traditional, orthodox practice of production of graffiti art works on the exteriors of trains as a by-product of the dissemination of graffiti art from New York City.

The article uses available literary sources on the topic of historical dissemination of graffiti art. Additionally fieldwork was conducted in various countries. Data were collected directly from local graffiti artists in the field or virtually through the internet with the method of personal interviews. The resulting synthesis of data is presented in seven sections. The paper examines partially the historical development of graffiti art in some internationally underexposed countries such as Czechoslovakia, Turkey, Singapore and Malaysia.

### 2. Origins of graffiti art

The birthplace of graffiti art is Philadelphia of the year 1967 (Ley and Cybriwsky, 1974; Reiss, 2007). However, as was shown in full detail by the first and probably most outstanding graffiti art historian, artist, and teacher Jack Stewart (1926–2005) (Duncan, 2010), the four forms representing graffiti art – tag, piece, character, throw-up – fully developed on the sides of subway trains in New York City of the 1970s (Stewart, 1989; Stewart, 2009). In the first half of the 1980s – around 1983 – graffiti art started expanding within the USA and graffiti art started crossing continents to Western Europe and Oceania (Chalfant & Prigoff, 1987; Ferrell, 1996: 30-37; Jacobson, 2001: 40).

### 3. The 1980s

Graffiti art was introduced to the world, outside of New York City, through three main channels: gallery exhibitions, cultural media (Kramer, 2009: 93-118) and interpersonal contact (see section 5 below). The Swedish art historian Staffan Jacobson (born 1948) created in the World Wide Web a freely accessible dictionary of graffiti, *The International Dictionary of Aerosol Art*, where he lists 12 graffiti art exhibitions of New Yorker graffiti artists in Western Europe. These gallery exhibitions took place in the period 1979–1985 in Roma, Kassel, Rotterdam, Groningen, Bologna, Munich, Amsterdam, Basel, Humlebæk, Otterlo, London and Stockholm (Jacobson, 2001: 53) (see Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> These gallery exhibitions had a noteworthy impact on the dissemination of graffiti art in Western Europe (Chalfant & Prigoff, 1987: 7-8; Writing in München 1983-1995: Graffiti Art #3, 1995: 4; Austin, 2001: 262). Margo Thompson, an art historian and author of the book *American Graffiti*, excellently examined graffiti art gallery exhibitions which took place in the 1980s in the USA and Western Europe (Thompson, 2009).

An even more significant impact on the diffusion of graffiti art on a worldwide scale was a product of the movies *Wild Style* (1982), *Beat Street* (1984) and the film documentary *Style Wars* (1983), which were broadcasted on television around the world in the 1980s (Ahearn, 1982; Chalfant and Silver, 1983; Lathan, 1984). The book *Subway Art* (1984), which reproduced Martha Cooper's (born 1943) and Henry Chalfant's (born 1940) colour photographs of graffiti art works on subway trains from early 1980s New York City also had an enormous impact on the spread of graffiti art in the world. This publication was also accompanied with supplementary explanatory texts about graffiti art culture (Cooper & Chalfant, 1984). The book sold until the present day over 500,000 copies (Cooper & Chalfant, 2009). These three reflections of the graffiti art culture from New York City – gallery exhibitions, movies and the book *Subway Art* – had in the 1980s an everlasting influence on certain, creative segments of youth around the world (Chalfant & Prigoff, 1987: 8; Munich S-Trains, 1991: 11; Miller, 1994: 181-182; Writing in München 1983-1995: Graffiti Art #3, 1995: 4; Schluttenhafner & Klaußenborg, 1995: 8; Wiese, 1996:13; Austin, 2001: 262-263; Mai & Remke, 2003: 2; Ganz, 2004: 126-128). As a result, a few adolescents around the globe started imitating the colourful graffiti art works they have seen in the gallery exhibitions, movies and the book (see further

section 5 below). The three movies – *Wildstyle*, *Beat Street*, *Style Wars* – were especially attractive to younger audiences as they introduced graffiti art as a part of a wider hip-hop movement from New York City. Hip-hop is considered as a culture consisting of four elements: graffiti art, break dancing, disk jockeying and rapping. Consequently, graffiti art was also labelled as hip-hop graffiti, because of its close connection to hip-hop (Ferrell, 1996; Phillips, 1996), which is nevertheless rather constructed. Scholars showed that this connection is not adequate as, besides others, not all graffiti artists were and are favouring the hip-hop culture or rap (hip-hop) music respectively (Kramer, 2009: 107-110; Snyder, 2009: 26-30). Nonetheless, the hip-hop culture helped transmit graffiti art around the globe (Ferrell, 1996: 9). By 1987 (Fig. 2), *Spraycan Art* documented graffiti art works already in ten countries: USA, England, Netherlands, France, Spain, West Germany, Austria, Denmark, Australia and New Zealand (Chalfant & Prigoff, 1987).

Based on academic and popular literature, it is possible to reconstruct a historical diffusion timeline of the graffiti art culture outside of the USA. By late 1982 (Chalfant & Prigoff, 1987) graffiti art was established, for instance, in Sydney, Australia and by 1983 in West Berlin, Dortmund, Hamburg and Munich in West Germany (Writing in München 1983-1995: Graffiti Art #3, 1995; Schluttenhafner & Klaußenborg, 1995: 8-10; Wiese, 1996: 13; Hamburgcitygraffiti, 2003; Mai & Remke, 2003: 2). Further, based on publications we can establish that trains were painted in Amsterdam, Holland in 1983 (DELTA, 1992) and that graffiti art occurred in 1983 in Denmark, Croatia, and in 1984 in Canada and South Africa (Ganz, 2004: 126, 18, 128, 328). This information is generally based on oral history of the graffiti art culture. The usage of qualitative research methods for the gathering of such data is common practice in graffiti art research (Castleman, 1980; Lachmann, 1988; Stewart, 1989; Miller, 1992; Ferrell, 1996; Austin, 2001; Kramer, 2009; Snyder, 2009). Susan Alice Lundy (born 1975) conducted research in Oakland, USA and during her research she observed that oral history is very important to graffiti artists. Lundy stated that she was struck by her “participant’s commitment to the integrity of his or her stories” (Lundy, 2008: 67). This comes as no surprise, as the graffiti art culture is only loosely organised and oral history is one of its only ways to preserve histories and events.<sup>2</sup>

Photographical documentation is to graffiti artists similarly important as oral history. Photographs of graffiti art works from New York City were already used in the 1980s for launch of the first graffiti art fanzine called *International Graffiti Times* (later renamed *International Get-Hip Times*) (Schmidlapp), which already in 1986 featured international graffiti art works from Venice and London (Austin, 2001: 250, 263). Many other magazines followed *International Graffiti Times*, including the international magazines from the late 1980s: *Bomber Magazine* (Holland), *14 K Magazine* (Switzerland), *Aerosol Art Magazine* (England) and *Hype Magazine* (Australia) (Ferrell, 1996: 10). Such magazine featured interviews, articles and reprinted photographs of graffiti art works. These magazines made graffiti art works accessible to wider insider audiences. Another mode of circulation of graffiti art works started by 1989 as video magazines such as *VideoGraf* featured moving footage, including interviews and productions of graffiti art works (Austin, 2001: 257).

These above highlighted events are providing only a partial overview of the events relating to the dissemination of the graffiti art culture from its place of origin in Philadelphia of the late 1960s to other areas in the 1980s. However, these accounts listed above demonstrated that graffiti art gained since the late 1960s on dynamics and this urban phenomenon spread until the end of the 1980s from North America to parts of Oceania, Africa and Europe. The dissemination was accompanied in the 1980s with the production of subcultural media (magazines) authored by graffiti artists.

#### 4. Case study: Czechoslovakia in early 1990s

Central and Eastern Europe was largely untouched by the dissemination of graffiti art until late 1989. The ideology within the Eastern Bloc back then prohibited and censored all Western influences in countries controlled by the Soviet Union (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania), including the free flow of information and the free movement of people from the East to the West. Therefore, the knowledge of a graffiti art culture among the Central and Eastern European youth was nearly zero. However, this rapidly changed after the collapse of Communist regimes in late 1989 and the subsequent democratization process within the Eastern Bloc. In 1990 West German graffiti artists quickly introduced graffiti art to the Berlin subway system in former Eastern Germany (Mai & Remke, 2003: 9). In addition, other cities in Central

and Eastern European countries started to be confronted with graffiti art. Graffiti art entered these countries along with other Western influences and Czechoslovakia can be used here as a case in point (Vladimir518&Collective, 2016; Wohlmuth, 2012: 10). Manifestations of Western culture and consumerism were in early 1990s welcomed in Czechoslovakia. The cities of Czechoslovakia were after four decades of communist rule (1948–1989) dominated with various shades of grey (Overstreet, 2006; Snopek, 2005).

Around 1990, several Czechoslovak youngsters decided to change the uniform appearance of the cities and once they discovered graffiti art, they knew that graffiti art was the right “tool” to bring colour to the grey cities. They learned about graffiti art in the very early 1990s from magazines, skateboarding magazines, and from trips to Western Europe (which was in the previous decade during the communist rule impossible). These young Czechoslovaks encountered graffiti art during their travels in Western Europe for the first time in their lives. For example MIRA2 (born 1978) got inspired by visuals of graffiti art in skateboarding magazines and by real life graffiti art works seen during a train trip to Helsinki, Finland in 1990 (Vladimir518, 2016: 330). POIS (born 1975) was in 1990 for a short time visiting a school in Frankfurt, Germany and encountered graffiti art there in the streets and he started to do first sketches on paper (POIS, 2009). Both MIRA2 and POIS started by tagging first with markers around 1991 (POIS, 2009; Vladimir518, 2016: 327). In addition, a French graffiti artist, POPAY (born 1971), visited Prague by 1990, and created tags and throw-ups in the Czechoslovak capital (Vladimir518, 2016: 308; Snopek, 2005: 17). Also German graffiti artists from Dortmund and Düsseldorf painted graffiti art works in Prague in the early 1990s (Overstreet, 2006: 21). As a result, it comes as not a big surprise that the scholar Jeff Ferrell reported that he photographed during the summer of 1991 already “scattered examples of hip hop graffiti in Prague” (Ferrell, 1996: 17) the capital of former Czechoslovakia.

#### 5. Informal channels: Mobility of young people

At this point, I would like to turn the attention back once more towards the dissemination channels of the graffiti art culture from New York to other territories around the world as was discussed above in section 3. *New York City: The global writing capital* is the name of a very interesting chapter in the book *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban*

*Crisis in New York City*, by the scholar Joe Austin (Austin, 2001: 261-266). Austin describes on six pages the diffusion of graffiti art from New York City to other locations of the world. Austin highlights the importance of informal channels on the dissemination of graffiti art. Austin suggested that an important informal channel responsible for the dissemination of graffiti art was represented in the 1980s in the circulation “of young people and photographs” between New York and other cities in the USA. This suggests that young people who moved out from New York to other cities, introduced graffiti art through personal contact themselves or through photographs to other peers in new territories (Austin, 2001: 262). As was highlighted above in section 4, informal channels were important also in the dissemination of graffiti art into former communist countries in Central Europe around 1990 (Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia). In Southeast Asia, the situation was similar. Graffiti art spread to Malaysia due to internet accessibility around the year 1999, skateboarding, and due to Singaporean graffiti artists who introduced graffiti art to local Malaysian youngsters through the internet and in person (Novak, 2011: 98-107; Novak, 2012: 108 - see section 6.2 below).

## **6. Present day: Graffiti art as a worldwide phenomenon**

After historically tracing the transmission of graffiti art in the first half of the 1980s to West Europe, Australia and in the late 1980s-early 1990s to Central and Eastern Europe the attention is now directed to the rest of the world. Nowadays one of the oldest and most visited graffiti websites, *ArtCrimes*, features graffiti from 450 cities worldwide (*About us: What we're doing and why*).

Austin reported in 2001 that graffiti art expanded to “Latin America, eastern and southern Europe, and the Caribbean” in the 1990s (Austin, 2001: 262). This correlates also with the information contained in the book *Graffiti World: Street Art from Five Continents*, published in 2004.<sup>3</sup> However, in 2013 in *The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti* the anthropologist and curator Rafael Schacter specified that graffiti art arrived in Mexico City and São Paulo in the 1980s, pushing the dissemination date of graffiti art in Latin America into the 1980s (Schacter, 2013: 98, 112). In addition, I would like to talk about two sources, which present graffiti art as a global phenomenon. Firstly, the in 2007 released film documentary *Bomb It*, which introduced graffiti artists from the following cities: Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco,

Tijuana, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Hamburg, Berlin, Cape Town, São Paulo and Tokyo (Reiss, 2007). Secondly, the scholar, Gregory J. Snyder, reported in 2009 the presence of graffiti artists in the cities of “New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington D.C., Paris, Berlin, Stuttgart, Amsterdam, Tokyo, Sao Paulo, and Santiago” (Snyder, 2009: 2). The four above highlighted reports from the 2000s did not – besides Japan and Singapore (Ganz, 2004) – draw much attention to the presence of graffiti art in Asia. Therefore, at this point I would like to focus on yet not much explored other global territories.

### **6.1 Turkey, Middle East and Maghreb**

Graffiti art, according to the popular book *Turkish Graffiti*, started developing in Turkey in the 1980s (Dindaş, 2009: 5). It seems, however, that the Turkish scene actually started developing rather in the late 1990s or early 2000s. Especially after examining the photographs published in one of earliest Turkish graffiti magazines *GRAFFTURK: Turkish graffiti magazine* it seems more probable that the development of the Turkish graffiti art movement dates into the 1990s. The known Turkish graffiti artist FUNK (born 1983) can be mentioned as a case in point,. FUNK started with graffiti art in Istanbul around the year 1998 (FUNK, 2014). Further, I conducted in Istanbul a group interview with one of the most important Turkish graffiti art crews: BOK (BAD OF KINGS). The crew had 7 members, counting PUNCH, MR.HURE, HERO, REPUS and others (BOK, 2014). The BOK crew was established around 2004 and its members started painting graffiti art around the year 2000. The BOK crew stated:

“Türkiyede graffitinin özgeçmiş 10, 15 yıllık bir şey. Çok eski deil.

[*The resume of graffiti [art] in Turkey is something around 10, 15 years. Not too old.*]

There are no direct indications for the early transmission of graffiti art from Germany to Turkey, but I assume that the dissemination of graffiti art into Turkey may strongly relate to Germany, as a significant number of the early German graffiti artists were of Turkish descent and they might have introduced graffiti art into Turken in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

Nowadays graffiti art is widely spread and can be located in countries such as Tunisia (Georgeon, 2012), Iraq (Novak

and Javanmiri, 2015) and many other countries not directly discussed in this present paper. For research papers on street and graffiti art from the Arab world refer to the volume XV of the *Romano-Arabica* journal: *Graffiti, Writing and Street Art in the Arab World* (2015).

## 6.2 Southeast and East Asia

Finally, attention is drawn to the region of Southeast and East Asia. For the dissemination of graffiti art into this region of the world were partially responsible, besides others, new media – the internet. The free flow of information over the internet in combination with pop culture influenced several youngsters to explore the graffiti art culture and the internet helped some to find other like-minded individuals (on this regional case see Novak, 2011: 93, 99, 103, 107 ). The first graffiti art magazine featuring reports from Asia was the Japanese *HSMagazine*. The international graffiti art magazine *Graphotism* featured in issue #43 a special report on several regional countries (JIROE, 2006). The region of Southeast and East Asia was later focused on by the magazine *INVASIAN* (Asia Graffiti Magazine, 2008) in its first issue published in Summer 2008.

In Southeast Asia graffiti art was probably first present in the Philippines in 1990 (Sanada & Hassan, 2010: 69; FLIP1, 2013) and then in Singapore in 1994 (Sanada & Hassan, 2010: 100; Novak, 2011: 90). The Singaporean graffiti artist SCOPE [aka FLAYME02 and HYBRID] (born 1976) started in 1994 the Singaporean/international crew OAC (OPERATION ART CORE). SCOPE discovered his passion for graffiti art after watching the movie *Beatstreet* (SCOPE, 2009). In Thailand graffiti art started probably developing in the early 1990s (Sanada & Hassan, 2010: 86, 90), as graffiti art was already present in the city of Chiang Mai by 1994. In South Korea graffiti art began to grow in the late 1990s (Sanada & Hassan, 2010: 39), similarly as in Taipei, Taiwan (Sanada & Hassan, 2010: 62) and Indonesia (Sanada & Hassan, 2010: 112). Among the first graffiti artists in Indonesia was BABAM (in short BAM), who started with graffiti art in Jakarta by 1997 (BABAM, 2009). Graffiti art was introduced to the east coast of China through Hong Kong and appeared for the first time in the 1990s in Guangzhou,<sup>5</sup> and in 2002 in Wuhan. However, the first time graffiti art was “introduced” to Hong Kong was in May 1982 (Witten & White, 2001: 160-161). Nevertheless, the Chinese graffiti artist TOUCH suggested that graffiti art in Guangzhou, China was present already in the beginning

of the 1990s and from there it spread to larger cities as Shanghai and Beijing (TOUCH, 2012). The Myanmar graffiti artist ZBIRN started performing graffiti art in mid-2011 in Singapore, but he did sketches in 2010 while staying in the state of Sabah, in Malaysia (ZBIRN, 2013). ZBIRN reported that in Myanmar the graffiti art culture started around the year 2009. However, the Malaysian graffiti artist SNOZZE (born 1988) reported, after a visit to Myanmar, that graffiti art started developing in Myanmar around the year 2002 (SNOZZE, 2012). In Vietnam CRAZ (born 1988) started doing graffiti art around Ho-Chi-Minh City by 2004 (CRAZ, 2009). In Brunei, according to CYDE02, the first graffiti artist was TYCAL in the year 2002 (CYDE02, 2009).

Historical development of the graffiti art culture in Malaysia dates back to the years 1999-2000 (Novak, 2011; Novak, 2012). The initial two locations of origin were the areas of Batu Pahat and Greater Kuala Lumpur on the Malaysian peninsula.<sup>6</sup> Graffiti art in peninsular Malaysia started developing in these two locations in parallel. In Batu Pahat the graffiti artist PHOBIA (born 1983) started doing graffiti art in the very late 1990s.<sup>7</sup> PHOBIA was first introduced to graffiti art through Singaporean breakdancers in an internet chat room (PHOBIA, 2008). The Singaporean graffiti art scene had significant influence on the development of the Malaysian graffiti art scene. For instance, the Singaporean graffiti artist SCOPE produced around the year 2000 a graffiti art piece for the Malaysian hip-hop music video *Jezzebelle*, by the group TOO PHAT (SCOPE, 2009; Flizow, 2012), which was exactly at the time when hip-hop started to attract more and more interest among Malaysian youth. By the end of the 1990s hip-hop culture in Malaysia had just started to become very popular (SAINT, 2009). Other Malaysian graffiti art pioneers as NENOK (born 1983), SUBWAY, VDS212 (born 1985), DREW (born 1983), MIST149 (born 1985), SAINT (born 1985) or KIOUE (born 1984) got introduced to graffiti art through hip-hop, skateboarding or by traveling abroad (Novak, 2011; Novak, 2012).

## 6.3 Reasons for the dissemination

In Fig. 3, I present a diagram suggesting possible relations between the Origins, Dissemination channels and Other Conditions relating to the spread of graffiti art around the globe. The diagram is based on the present article and on research conducted by other researchers and authors (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974; Castleman, 1982; Chalfant & Silver, 1983;

Chalfant & Prigoff, 1987; Stewart, 1989; Miller, 1992; Ferrell, 1996; Austin, 2001; Macdonald, 2001; Ganz, 2004; Lundy, 2008; Kramer, 2009; Snyder, 2009; Stewart, 2009; Thompson, 2009; Sanada & Hassan, 2010; Novak, 2011; Novak, 2014a; Novak & Javanmiri, 2015). In the present paper, I will pay attention to “Painting on Trains” and “Establishing of Forms and their Sizes.”

### 6.3.1 Graffiti art on exterior sides of trains

It is of interest to point out that in the 1980s graffiti artists in new territories also created graffiti art works on the exterior sides of trains, as was originally the case in New York City (Chalfant & Prigoff, 1987: 8, 86; Munich S-Trains, 1991: 1-3; Wiese, 1996: 14-17; Mai & Remke, 2003: 4-9). In 1987, the publication *Spraycan Art* reported that trains were painted in the cities of Vienna, Düsseldorf, Munich, Copenhagen, Paris, London and Sydney (Chalfant & Prigoff, 1987: 8). However, graffiti art works were not always produced only on exterior sides of subway trains, but on all variations of transportation rail-vehicles available (Austin, 2001: 265). To produce graffiti art works on the exteriors of rail-vehicles became an orthodox tradition of the graffiti art culture until present day. Graffiti art is also often produced on the exterior sides of freight trains (see Fig. 4) (Ferrell, 1998; Austin, 2001: 247-249).

Especially in the Western world, graffiti art works produced on the exterior sides of trains are still highly prized. This is an important point. The production of graffiti art works on the exterior sides of trains, besides the USA, took place in the 1980s and 1990s in Europe, Australia and in other countries. The graffiti art writers in new territories copied the expressive styles, designs and importantly also the behavioural patterns of their role models from New York City of the 1970s and 1980s. One of these conducts was the creative production of graffiti art works on exterior sides of public transportation rail-vehicles.<sup>8</sup> This influenced the overall direction of the global graffiti art culture and anchored this urban subcultural activity on the edge between vandalism and art. Still to the present day graffiti art works created on the exterior sides of trains are regarded, by Western graffiti artists especially, as an authentic continuation of the New York type of graffiti art from the 1970s (see Figs. 5-6).<sup>9</sup>

### 6.3.2 Graffiti art on exterior sides of trains in Asia

In the 2000s graffiti art works were being created on exterior sides of trains in Hong Kong, Thailand and Indonesia (Sanada & Hassan, 2010: 36-37, 81, 109-110). It is often the Western “graffiti art tourists” who paint trains in Asia, as it is desirable from the Western graffiti art cultural perspective (see Fig. 7). In Southeast Asian Malaysia, the local graffiti artists usually do not paint graffiti art works on train exteriors (Novak, 2014a: 39). However, the American graffiti art personalities UTAH and ETHER produced for example in the year 2016 a whole train (double whole car in this case) in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur and in other Asian cities (Grifters, 26 April 2016; Tay, 2016). Further, in May 2010 a Swiss and a British graffiti artist (Singapore sentences Swiss man to caning for spraying graffiti on subway car, 2010; Writer, 2010) created two multicolored graffiti art work (ongyouyuan1907, 18 May 2010) panel pieces, on the exterior of a Singaporean MRT subway train. This caused an enormous stir in the Singaporean media. One of the graffiti artists fled the country and a “warrant of arrest was issued on June 8 [2010] and INTERPOL member countries were alerted” (Suparto, 2010). The other graffiti artist was arrested in Singapore and sentenced in June 2010 (Singapore sentences Swiss man to caning for spraying graffiti on subway car, 2010; Writer, 2010).

Due to Singapore’s strict legislation this is a very different response to graffiti art vandalism, as the exteriors of trains are being painted in Western countries on a regular daily basis (Art Crimes: Trains Art Crimes: Trains; TOPxGRAFFITI, 16 June 2013) but Singapore’s tough stance on any sort of crime in general is known.<sup>10</sup> However, it is quite unheard of to issue an Interpol warrant for a graffiti art work – even though it was illegally produced on a public transportation rail-vehicle exterior. Especially, if we take into account that “Singapore’s subway operator, SMRT Corp., didn’t report the incident to police for two days because staff thought the brightly colored graffiti [art work] was an advertisement” (Singapore sentences Swiss man to caning for spraying graffiti on subway car, 2010). Pieces on exterior sides of trains can be considered to represent to graffiti artists a sort of trophy in the form of the photograph of the work.

There is another interesting feature relating to the graffiti art cultural folklore of painting graffiti art works on the exteriors of trains – the sizes of graffiti art works. Once graffiti art

was disseminated into other global locations, local graffiti artists in new territories copied not only the behavioural codes of their admired role models, but the graffiti artists also unconsciously “copied” the scale of graffiti art works established in New York City of the 1970s.

### 6.3.3 Scale of graffiti art works

Anthropometrical limitations dramatically determine the scale of graffiti art works (Novak, 2014b). However, I see also a historical reasoning behind the determined average size of the graffiti art form “piece.” Early evolutionary stages of graffiti art took place in New York City, especially on the New York City Transit Authorities’ (MTA) subway cars. New York subway cars have a length of approximately 15m and a door height of 2m. “Pieces” first appeared on these trains around 1971–1972 (Stewart, 2009: 60-63), and they were commonly placed on the “panels” beneath the subway cars’ windows and in between the doors (see as well the photos in: Schmidlapp and PHASE2, 1996). The distance between two doors was around 5 m,<sup>12</sup> which indicates that the approximate size of the earliest “pieces” ever produced was around 5m in width and 1.2m in height.<sup>13</sup> In 1972 graffiti artists in New York City started painting larger “pieces” on the sides of subway cars: “top-to-bottoms”. To fill up the over 15m width exterior side of a subway car graffiti artists producing “top-to-bottom pieces” often teamed up with one or two other graffiti artists.<sup>14</sup> This teaming up leads to the conclusion that the early “top-to-bottom pieces” were around 5m of width and 2m height, if three graffiti artists teamed up.

Novak reported the exact average size of a “piece” in Malaysia in 2011–2012 to have been 4.73m by 1.94m (Novak, 2014b). What does this say about the current sizes of graffiti art works more than 40 years later? It seems that the scale of graffiti art works established in the 1970s on the exterior sides of subway cars in New York City – 5m by 2m – and from there these scale indications disseminated in the 1980s around the globe and remained ever since the same, even on walls.

## 7. Conclusion

The present article briefly demonstrated that graffiti art was/ is especially appealing through its visual attractiveness to younger adolescent audiences around the world (see on

this point as well the paper by Novak and Yousof, 2014: 8). The followers of this urban practice appropriate established cultural norms common in the graffiti art culture. Channels such as free flow of information and mobility of young people were responsible for the transmission of graffiti art on a worldwide scale. It is necessary to state that there is a need to expand significantly our knowledge about the history and specific qualities and conditions of graffiti art through academic research to understand graffiti art more precisely.



Fig. 1. Dissemination of the graffiti art culture from New York City to Western Europe in early 1980s. Gallery exhibitions of New Yorker graffiti artists in Western Europe, a printed publication and motion pictures about graffiti art as part of a wider hip-hop culture played major roles in the transnational dissemination.



Fig. 2. In 1987 the publication *Spraycan Art* featured graffiti art works from the following cities: New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburg/Cleveland, Chicago, San Francisco/Bay Area, Los Angeles, London, Bristol, Wolverhampton, Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Paris, Barcelona, [West] Berlin, Brühl, Vienna, Copenhagen, Sydney and Auckland.

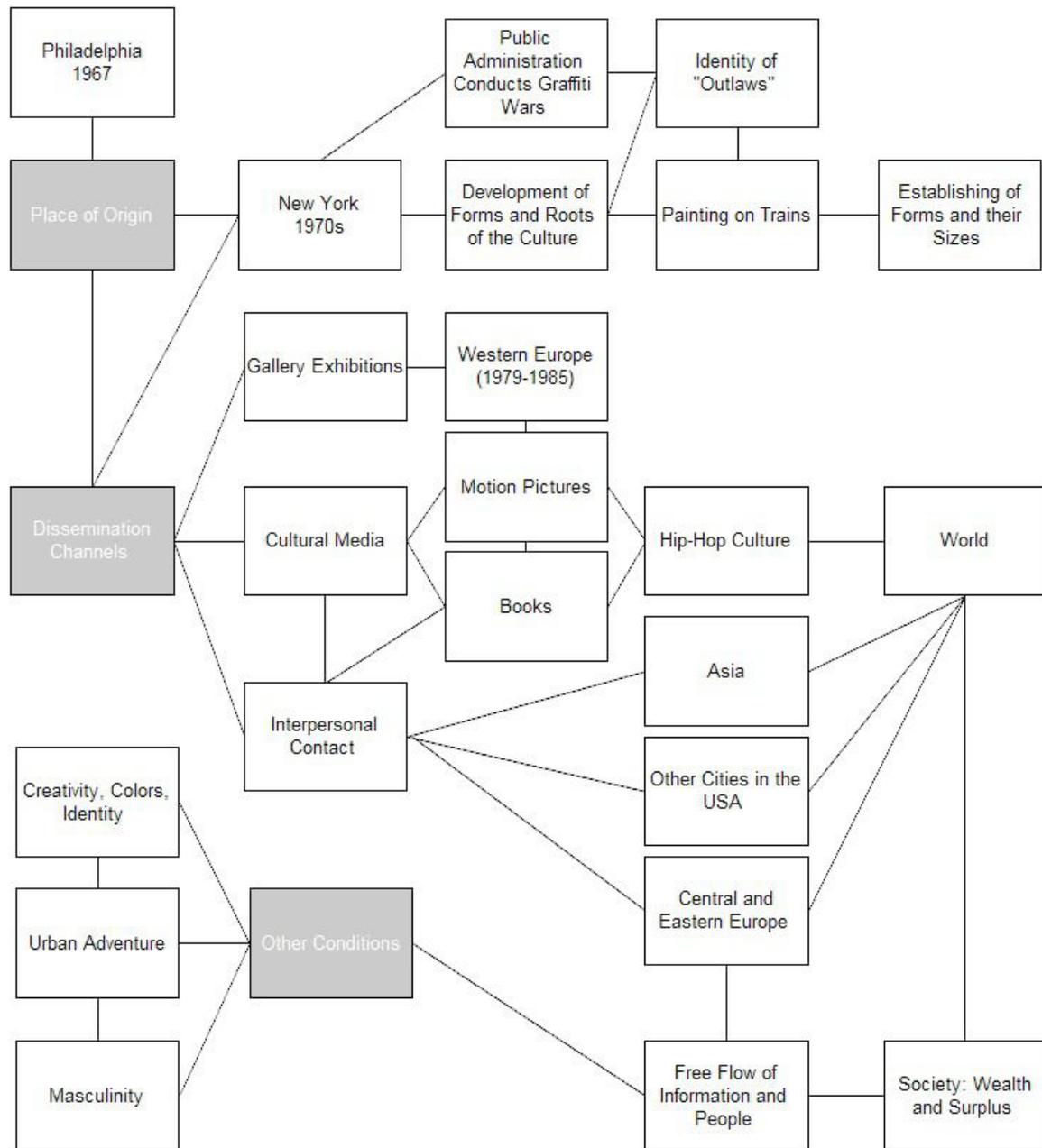


Fig. 3. Diagram representing the Origins, Dissemination Channels and Other Conditions relating to the spread of graffiti art around the world.



Fig. 4: A cargo train with graffiti art in Prague, Czech Republic.

Photo: 09 June 2017, Prague Main Railway Station. Google Maps: 50.084272, 14.436547.



Fig. 5: An operational public transportation train with graffiti art in Berlin, Germany.

Photo: 16 July 2016, Friedrichstrasse train station. Google Maps: 52.520374, 13.387092.



Fig. 6: An operational intercity train with graffiti art in Sofia, Bulgaria.  
 Photo: 04 June 2016, Sofia Cenral Station. Google Maps: 42.712871, 23.319797.



Fig. 7: Not operational public transportation trains with graffiti art in Istanbul, Turkey.  
 From left: STUR, MERDE, BLOW. On the right pieces by the Americans UTAH & ETHER.  
 Photo: 28 April 2014, Hayderpaşa train station. Google Maps: 40.997026, 29.021919.

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## Notes

1. On some of these gallery exhibitions see: Witten & White (2001); Thompson (2009).

2. Stories are according to Steven Powers (born 1968) one of the most interesting facets of graffiti art: 'What makes graffiti [art] so great and the attending graffiti [art] magazines so weak are the stories'. (Powers, 1999: 82).

3. The book (Ganz, 2004) has three main chapters – Americas (107 pages), Europe (202 pages) and the Rest of the world (43 pages). Rest of the world is represented with: Japan (Hiroshima, Tokyo), Australia (Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Prospect and Sydney), South Africa (Cape Town, Johannesburg) and Singapore. There is as well a photo from Czech Republic (Prague) and Mongolia.

4. For example the in the 1980s and 1990s, very active graffiti artist COWBOY69 is of Turkish descent. For COWBOY69's works see: Writing in München 1983-1995 (1995).

5. DEZIO suggested the date 1998 in Sanada and Hassan, (2010: 14).

6. The Story of PHOBIA in Teh (2012); Novak (2011).

7. Back then, PHOBIA wrote the tag names BEE and SPARKLING.

8. Jeff Ferrell and Robert D. Weide defined in the *Spot theory*, the production of graffiti art works on trains in relation to "liquid spots" (Ferrell & Weide, 2010). This implicates that "the spot at which graffiti [art] is written is not necessarily the spot at which it will be viewed" (ibid. p. 57), as graffiti art works are produced on exteriors of trains in train yards, but the works are viewed in other locations as in train stations.

9. The Czech, but internationally well-known graffiti artist CAKES/POINT answered in the following way the question why he thinks that graffiti artists paint on trains until today: "*It is folklore. Part of the tradition*". CAKES. (2009, 01 September). *Email Interview*.

10. As the author of this present article, I am in no way supporting or glorifying the defacement, modification of any private or public property!

11. The New York City subway train type R-33 was identified on the web site NYCSUBWAY ([www.nycsubway.org/perl/caption.pl?/img/cars/sheet-r33.jpg](http://www.nycsubway.org/perl/caption.pl?/img/cars/sheet-r33.jpg)) based up on comparison with photographic evidence from Jack Stewart's publication *Graffiti Kings*; photographs of the "red" trains on pages 40-63. The width of the car R-33 is 49'7-7/8" feet and the height of the door is 6'2-1/2" feet: *NYC Subway resources: R-33*. (2013).

12. The distance between two doors on a R-33 car was 17'1" feet: *ibid*.

13. This conclusion is based on photographic evidence provided in Stewart (2009: 60-61; 62; 65; 67; 70-73).

14. Historical evidence is provided again in photographs: *ibid*: 68-69; 80-81; 136; 13.

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## Street art, heritage and embodiment

**Laima Nomeikaite**

Department of Heritage and Society, Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research

Postboks 736, Sentrum, N-0105 Oslo, Norway

laima.nomeikaite@niku.no

### Abstract

In recent years, street art and graffiti have been framed as items of cultural heritage. However, until now, there has been no clear agreement on the definition or conceptualization of street art as heritage. This research presents limitations of the conventional approaches to heritage and argues that street art and graffiti does not represent a dichotomy between tangible and intangible heritage or people and object, but instead represents an inseparable relationship of the two. This study calls for greater engagement with more-than-representational approaches in studying the relationship between street art and heritage. More-than-representational approaches address street art's crucial relationships with everyday life and change, as well as its relational, performative, embodied and affective components. Based on more-than-representational approaches, this research conceptualizes street art as a heritage experience in terms of embodiment, affect and everyday performativity. Furthermore, by situating the concept of embodiment within the case of Bergen, Norway, the paper provides an example of how the reasons and meanings behind the preservation of street artworks can be captured within a local context.

**Keywords:** Street art, Heritage, More-than-representational, Everyday life, Affect, Embodiment

### 1. Introduction

During the last decade, street art and graffiti have received increased attention within the field of heritage, in terms of issues related to conservation and preservation, cultural values, memory, identity, power and place-making. However, there are still limitations and differences of opinion on the definition and conceptualization of street art and graffiti as heritage. Within academia, street art and graffiti have been defined as tangible heritage (Poon, 2016), intangible heritage (Burdick & Vicencio, 2015), in between tangible and intangible heritage (MacDowall, 2006) and both tangible and intangible heritage (Merrill, 2015; Mulcahy & Flessas, 2016). Most often, street art has been defined in relation to formal heritage frameworks such as the UNESCO 2003 Convention (which defines it as intangible heritage) or the Australian ICOMOS 'Burra Charter' (which defines it as tangible heritage) (ICOMOS Australia, 1999). However, reference to these frameworks has typically lacked detailed explanation of how, for example, street art or graffiti contributes to aesthetic or social heritage values. Moreover, as I will illustrate later in this paper, the definitions of heritage developed by UNESCO and ICOMOS present a gap not only for street art and graffiti, but in general, due to the legal practices and dichotomies it

creates between tangible and intangible heritage. With street art, it has shown that the tangible and intangible heritage dichotomy complicates the application of existing heritage strategies and frameworks (Merrill, 2015). In addition, street art and graffiti is a form of art which cannot be separated from the urban environment or its viewer (Young, 2005: 72). In this paper, I will argue that street art and graffiti does not represent a dichotomy between tangible and intangible heritage or people and object, but instead represents an inseparable relationship of the two. This argument supports Laurajane Smith's (2006: 44) assertion that "heritage is not a 'thing'; it is not a 'site', building or other material object with defined meanings and values' as ICOMOS defines tangible heritage; rather, heritage must be experienced, and 'heritage is the experience" (Smith, 2006: 45- 47). Instead of focusing on street art and graffiti as static object or artefact, I suggest a conceptualization of street art and graffiti as sensuous and embodied experience in which human body interacts with street artworks and urban space in everyday life.

This study calls for greater engagement with more-than-representational approaches in studying the relationship between street art and heritage. 'More-than-representational'

stems from non-representational theory (Thrift, 2008). However, Lorimer (2005) prefers to use the term 'more-than-representational' in order to avoid reductionist approaches that are 'against the representational' – acknowledging that both approaches are needed. In recent years, scholars have called for further attention to more-than-representational approaches in the field of heritage studies (Byrne, 2009; Crouch, 2000, 2010; Haldrup & Bøerenholdt, 2015; Lashua & Baker, 2016; Smith, 2006; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton & Watson, 2013; Waterton, 2014). A more-than representational approach to heritage stresses the importance of human interaction with heritage or the physical environment through embodied processes and practices emerging within relational, contingent and dynamic spaces in everyday life (Haldrup & Bøerenholdt, 2015). Relational, contingent and dynamic spaces refer to the shift “from static site or artefact to questions of engagement, experience and performance” (Waterton, 2014: 824). This approach focuses on the social and cultural doings of people with material objects, but it also focuses on what cultural work does to a human body. It focuses on the personal, emotional, social and embodied doing of heritage rather than its material representation. Street art and graffiti is beyond representational; it engages us, communicates with us, surprises us and makes us feel. It is experienced through the body, and any human activity – for example 'visual' activity – occurs through/in the space, as “space is a bodily and sensorial interpretation of the world” (Samson, 2015: 294).

In the following section I will present the limitations of the conventional approaches to heritage and I will introduce the more-than-representational approaches to heritage. Next, drawing on more-than-representational theory, I will conceptualize street art as a heritage experience in terms of embodiment, affect and everyday performativity. Finally, by using the concept of “embodiment” and the case study of the preservation of street artworks by Argus in Bergen, Norway I will provide an example of how the meanings of preservation motives might be captured.

This research combines empirical and theoretical approaches. The theoretical approaches combine cultural and heritage studies and more-than-representational theory. Three exemplary cases are illustrative of the city of Bergen, Norway. I conducted semi-structured interviews with street artists from Bergen and a manager of the street art blog MotVeggen in Bergen. I also conducted unstructured-interviews with persons who passed by the artworks in the city space. All of

the interviews were conducted during summer and autumn 2016. The interviews with the street artists provided me with information about their motives for selecting urban spaces, the meanings behind their paintings and their opinions on and recommendations for street artwork preservation and protection. I also used methods of observation. Observation allows a researcher (i.e., an observer) to experience reality by seeing, hearing and interacting with a place (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Having lived in Bergen for the past 14 years, I have interacted with the Bergen environment and experienced the city's development of street art over this time.

## **2. From conventional to more-than-representational approaches to heritage**

The restrictive definitions and concepts that frame heritage work convey defined boundaries between experts and community members, people and objects, present and past, and tangible and intangible heritage. These boundaries have encouraged heritage scholars to revise heritage concepts and practices (Fairclough, Harrison, Jameson, & Schofield, 2008; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Ruggles & Silverman, 2009; Smith, 2006; Smith & Akagawa, 2009; Walter, 2014). International conventions such as the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Australia's ICOMOS 1999 Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter) have been criticized for their divisions of intangible and tangible heritage (Bakka, 2015; Kaufman, 2013; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Smith, 2006). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004: 53) expresses the view that the UNESCO convention fails to link the safeguarding of intangible heritage with the protection of a place. She claims that the convention does not ensure a holistic approach to culture, wherein the tangible and intangible are interconnected: “whereas like tangible heritage, intangible heritage is culture, like natural heritage, it is alive. The task, then is to sustain the whole system as a living entity and not just to collect ‘intangible artefacts’” (2004: 53). Smith (2015) asserts that international conventions emphasize the preservation of material things, and in so doing, marginalize the practices and beliefs of source communities. The UNESCO World Heritage listings are chosen and authorized by a select group of experts, who promote particular heritage sites over others (Smith, 2015: 134). The convention includes a broad range of measurements that require an expert's knowledge to ensure the viability of intangible cultural heritage.

'Safeguarding' means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage. (UNESCO, 2003, Article 2.3)

Edil Bakke (2015: 138) notes that safeguarding is at the core of the 2003 convention: continuing to make traditional boats, continuing to sing, continuing to dance and so forth. However, he explains that it is doubtful that practices – or intangible heritage – can be safeguarded and legitimized by experts, because they “do not contribute to the continuation of the practice among the tradition bearers, [...] only practitioners can keep practices going” (2015: 156). The continuing practice, he asserts, can only be done “as part of everyday life; it can be individuals or groups practicing their skills, often highly developed, in their leisure time, or as part of their livelihood” (2015: 138).

The ICOMOS Burra Charter reflects the idea of heritage as 'frozen in time', in terms of the objects and values that are ascribed to it. The charter defines objects as consisting of non-renewable fabric and values (Poulios, 2013: 172). Heritage values are mutable and highly influenced by societal change; they evolve over time (De la Torre, 2013). Yet the charter focuses on the preservation of material fabric and the values that are ascribed to it. Araoz (2011: 58, 59) argues that all heritage values are intangible and can neither be protected nor preserved nor ascribed; permanent freezing of values is impossible, and indeed “heritage professionals have never really protected or preserved values.”

The limitations of representational theory are grounded in the theory's dependence on value-based systems, objectification of the gaze, heritage as framed or fixed and linguistic-based structures of meaning making. Critics have called attention to more-than-representational approaches in the field of heritage studies (Byrne, 2009; Lashua & Baker, 2016; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton, & Watson, 2017; Waterton, 2014; Waterton & Watson, 2013). More-than-representational theory stems from non-representational theory (Thrift, 2008). However, Lorimer prefers to use the term 'more-than-representational', as 'more-than' facilitates research into “multifarious, open encounters in the realm of practice that matter most” (Lorimer, 2005: 83). More-than-representative theory moves away from representations or “the established academic habit of

striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgment and ultimate representation” (Lorimer, 2005: 84). Instead, it refers to “what people or things do and thus squarely engages with practices” (Müller, 2015: 3), and seeks “better to cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds” (Lorimer, 2005: 83). It does not neglect representations, but merely emphasizes that “practices, affects, things, technologies – [are] intertwined with the production of meaning” (Müller, 2015: 3). In more detail, it is concerned with:

How life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions (Lorimer, 2005: 84).

Heritage studies have attempted to define and understand heritage through notions of affect, performativity and everyday practice. The turn towards 'practice' in heritage studies emphasizes the ways in which people interact routinely at heritage sites, landscapes and museum spaces in everyday life (Auclair, 2015; Crouch, 2010; Edensor, 2005; Haldrup & Børenholdt, 2015; Schofield, 2009; Wylie, 2005). Wylie (2005) uses coast walking and writing as a tool to capture embodied experience with the coastal landscape, presenting that landscape is not only visual, but resonating with a range of sensory experiences such as smells, touch, sounds and aural. For Wylie, landscape is lived and practiced, which is never fixed or static, but always in the making.

The affective turn in heritage studies recognizes spaces of heritage as agents of persons' experiences, practical skills, emotions, memories, embodied movements and performances (Harrison, 2013; Tolia-Kelly et al., 2017; Waterton, 2014). Spaces of heritage connect humans with their physical environment, “as with the train station, the shopping centre, the prison and so forth – that garner the affective and emotive values that shape the possibilities for our bodily movements and capacities” (Waterton, 2014: 824). Such spaces refer to the shift “from static site or artefact to questions of engagement, experience and performance” (Waterton, 2014: 824). This perspective acknowledges Laurajane Smith's definition: “all heritage is intangible not only because of the values we give to heritage, but because of the cultural work that heritage does in any society” (Smith & Akagawa, 2009: 6). Heritage is always changing and alive,

whatever the material forms it takes (buildings, artworks, and landscapes) has liveliness, it performs on the viewer and social, as well as it is constructed by the social (Crouch, 2001, 2010; Haldrup & Børenholdt, 2015). The spaces of heritage are interconnected between the present and the past, as 'they will always be in a process of becoming ... it will never be a fixed or entirely anticipated way' (as quoted in Waterton 2014: 828).

This focus on emotion, feeling and sensation is often ignored by the conventional understanding of heritage. Byrne (2009) argues that local peoples' affective responses to heritage sites works against formal heritage frameworks, as such frameworks do not engage in an understanding of the human experiences and feelings that are attached to these sites. The affective turn seeks to understand the emotional nature of peoples' interactions with historical environments (Schorch, 2014). The concepts of emotion, feeling and affect serve to understand visitors' embodied experiences, or what is felt at heritage sites and museums. For example, it focuses on understanding painful or 'difficult' historical events (Logan and Reeves 2009). Emotion is also used to analyze the everyday museum experience or the interpersonal relationships within community engagement settings (Munro, 2014).

### **3. Embodiment, street art and everyday heritage**

Non-representational theory (Thrift, 2008) conceptualizes the body as "sensuous, sensitive, agentive and expressive in relation to the world, knowing and innovating amongst context and representations that become refigured in practice" (Crouch, 2001: 62). Everyday practice describes the routine ways in which people interact in everyday life – the ways in which they bodily and sensorially interact with the material world (art objects or physical environments) and how the material world is agentive to action, itself. Such practice can involve a range of activities, such as walking, singing, dancing, painting, photographing and so forth. Performative everyday practice involves sensorial, emotional and embodied interaction with the material world. Performativity is what take place, for example, "in-between the work of art and its participant" (Samson, 2015: 293). Furthermore, performativity emphasizes the transitional and transformative process wherein "the everyday and the commonplace, events and occurrences shape our lives and social practices and give our lives pattern and meaning" (Schofield, 2009: 96). People construct meanings and feelings about physical environment through their everyday practices. De Certeau (2010: 883)

explains that practices such as walking provide people with various means of producing a place "walking constitutes a paradigmatic illustration of the force of practice and its role in the ongoing (re)production of place." Furthermore, he explains that place making through walking is facilitated by the relational experience of the thinking, feeling body/subject who registers the surrounding environment (De Certeau, 1984). Place within the more-than representational approach is not physically bounded or plotted on a map, but rather, "place always conjures the lived, felt, and relational experience of a thinking, feeling body/subject" (Duff, 2010: 885).

Furthermore, non-representational theory is concerned with the affective capacities of the body. Affects relate to the body's capacity to affect and be affected by other bodies. Affect can refer to "an array of feeling states characteristic of everyday life, with its constant shift in mood and emotional resonance" (Thrift, 2004: 59; in Duff, 2010: 884). These states constitute the emotional states of lived experiences: negative experiences can lead to negative emotional projections such as anger, frustration, disgust and outrage, while positive experiences can lead to delight, joy, gratitude and hope. Each of these emotional states corresponds with a specific feeling state (Duff, 2010: 884). Feelings are ongoing reflections and associations to for example an emotion or about valuing, meaning or attitudes (ibid).

In Spinozist and Deleuzian philosophy, bodies are not only human bodies, but also the bodies of buildings and objects – the fabric and form of the city (Samson, 2015: 318). Kristine Samson (2015: 318) explains that the materiality of urban space, the human body and our perceptions simultaneously and constantly affect one another. Samson (2015: 318) describes that "affect between bodies could be understood as dynamic relations, for instance, the human social body and the urban environment, its design and architecture." Simmon O'Sullivan (2013), in his book chapter 'The aesthetics of affect: Thinking art beyond representation', examines art through the aesthetics of affect. Following Spinoza, O'Sullivan defines affect "as the effect another body, an art object, for example, has upon my own body and my body's duration" (2013: 11). Art is an experience – a body register; it opens a path to feeling and seeing the world differently (ibid).

Halsey and Young (2006: 296) stress that street art and graffiti is more than visual, instead it is embodied or inherently haptic – "that for particular kinds of bodies a surface is never

just 'looked upon' so much as it is felt or lived." They assert that we perceive and experience the space of street artworks and the urban environment with all the senses (aural, visual, haptic, physical, visual, touch). Street art is experienced in the space between the human body and the artwork. It ruptures people's sensory experiences as they pass through public space in ordinary life. Further, it is an art form that is profoundly different from art in galleries. Street art is part of the cityscape, with the viewer and object inseparable: "street art is being written on the skin of the city" (Young, 2005: 73). The experience of street art comprises a broad range of senses, movements of cars and people, and city tastes, smells and sounds. Street art and the viewer create instant meanings through engagement and everyday spatial production – for instance, through a passerby's physical and sensory engagement with the street artwork and urban environment. Street art is performative in the sense that it grasps the flow of everyday life: "in rhyming the rhythms of the landscape and the body, meaning and reality are constituted in performance" (Bolt, 2010: 171). People construct meanings and feelings about a street artwork or physical environment through their everyday practices of walking, writing, sensing, painting, seeing, and so forth.

Hanauer's (2004) study shows that graffiti writing can have embodied personal psychological content. He documented the use of graffiti as a mourning ritual following the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak in Tel Aviv. Here, graffiti transformed a site into a living object and functioned as a response to national trauma and an act of participatory and personal mourning. Furthermore, Hanauer explained that graffiti played an important therapeutic role for the people who were affected by this traumatic event; it allowed for verbal and visual responses, it embodied personal feelings and beliefs and it enabled meaning to be drawn from the trauma. Diane Walle (2014), in her analysis of group therapy, concluded that image making and an image, itself, can be performative by enabling suppressed feelings to be expressed and "here-and-now" emotional experiences to be accessed; further, art objects can contain powerful emotions.

In street art, affect between bodies could refer to the dynamic relationship between an artwork and the community, the materiality of the urban space and peoples' "perceptions." The meanings, feelings and affective qualities that are attached to a particular street artwork might be unknown until it is removed. Thrift (2008: 61) claims that "the particular nature of individual affects and their provenance may be unclear –

even unconscious." Removal of an artwork can reveal the meanings and feelings that are attached to the artwork or its place. I will explain this in more detail through the example of the removal of the Argus street artwork *What Do You See* in the Møhlenpris neighbourhood of Bergen, Norway.

In summer 2014, a municipality worker painted over the artwork. The piece was not removed intentionally; rather, the worker was carrying out his regular job of repairing the wall, unaware of the significance of the painting for the neighborhood. The day after the removal, a member of the community sent a complaint to the local news channel, NRK. NRK conducted interviews at the spot at which the painting had been located. Emotional reactions to the painting's removal were described and aired on the local news channel NRK Hordaland (4 August 2014):

I was totally upset. It was so great! (Møhlenpris resident)

I saw through the window at work that they were cleaning the wall, and thought "God dammit" (Møhlenpris resident)

The municipal leader of the Sports Service expressed that the municipality had not known that the painting had been removed:

Here is simply someone who was told to fix the wall, and did so. But the result was, as we see, not very good. [...] I understand heartily that residents miss it. This was the signature of the area as well.

Two days later, Argus repainted *What Do You See*, and this resulted in much happiness in the community. Local reactions were again broadcast by NRK Hordaland (19 August 2014):

I was so happy when I saw it. There are many in this area who care about this street artwork. (Worker in the neighborhood)

Oh, is it back now? That's great! (Old woman from the neighborhood)

The removal of *What Do You See* led the municipality and community to consider the affective qualities of the street artwork. The community expressed negative emotions when the artwork was removed and positive emotions when it was repainted. Thus, the removal led to an evaluation of the importance of the street artwork to the neighborhood, and it unfolded the community's understanding of the shared collective space/place.



Fig. 1. Argus "Otto" stencil. Source: Permission obtained from Walter Wehus/ Motveggen.com

The removal of an artwork can lead to a realization of the specific experiences or experiential connections the work previously triggered; for example, “you notice new colors, discern details previously ignored, hear extraordinary sounds, as familiar landscapes of sense sharpen and intensity” (Bennett, 2001: 5). Furthermore, the removal of artworks can create atmospheric experiences that are “affective, characterized by intensities of feelings that are co-constituted by people and their spatial and material environment” (Hillary & Sumartojo, 2014: 202). Hillary and Sumartojo illustrate that the ‘urgent ephemerality’ created by the erasure of street art and graffiti and the new art installation of Adrian Doyle’s *Empty Nursery Blue* in Rutledge Lane in Melbourne led to an affective atmosphere. This atmosphere, in turn, led to a realization of the embodied relationship between street art and various publics, and the sense of meaning and belonging to the place. Through an atmospheric experience, the role of street art was considered, as was the community’s relationship to the site and the community’s internal relationships.

#### 4. Embodiment and the meaning of the preservation of Argus street artworks in Bergen

In recent years, Bergen has developed into a street art destination attracting international and national artists and audiences. Although the city of Bergen has begun to open more doors for street art, graffiti is not yet widely accepted by the public, and remains the old enemy – society’s apparatus for control (Grasdal, 2015). The uncommissioned images of both street art and graffiti are still under the authority of the state or city, and this often leads to their spontaneous removal. In what follows, I will examine the exceptional case of the preservation of Argus’s *Otto* and *Smiley* stencil artworks.

Argus’s *Otto* and *Smiley* street artworks were preserved with Plexiglas not long after they appeared on street walls. The impetus for preserving Argus’s *Otto* came from the private owner in 2014, and the faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Bergen called for the preservation of *Smiley* in 2015. The day after *Smiley* was tagged over, the local newspaper *Bergens Tidende* published an article titled “*Smiley* has been Cleaned”; in the article, the tagging was described with the statement “zero respect” (*Bergens Tidende*, 18 September 2015). Walter Wehus (*Bergens Tidende*, 5 July, 2015) expressed that the University of Bergen was usually very quick to remove street artworks, but

not this time: after the tagging incident, the university secured the artwork with Plexiglas. The question could be raised: Why were these street artworks preserved? What were the heritage values concerning preservation of these artworks?

*Otto* and *Smiley* are perceived as city symbols of Bergen. Argus painted *Smiley* in 2015, and *Otto* was painted in 2014. Otto Fredrik Wollertsen (*Otto*) and Tore Syvert Moen (*Smiley*) were called the “best known Bergen characters” and “city originals.” They both recently passed away. When I asked Argus about the meaning of these characters for Bergen, he explained:

They signify the outsiders, the ones who do not design their own environments but still are the ones who are most affected by it. The conscience of society. The outcasts, the pariahs. The ones we all know about, but whom no one knows. The ones who make up the fabric of the city and make it a richer place. (Personal communication, 14 June 2016)

But why are these characters significant for Bergen? How have we come to know them, without knowing?

##### 4.1 Affective bodies

The human subjects of *Otto* (Fig. 1) and *Smiley* (Fig. 2) can be compared to actors on a stage. With a distinct form of dress, bodily gesture and style they were noticeable persons in the Bergen city centre. Their particular style and expressiveness were described as follows:

*Otto* – the old man and his bike, a familiar sight in the city. *Otto* never riding the bike, just shambling around, or seated on a small box on the pavement, playing the harmonica on occasions. One of the rare characters whom I believe everybody looks upon with great sympathy. (Argus, argusgate.wordpress.com)

*Smiley* was described in the following way:

Long overcoat, big beard and roll between his fingers. Every day Tore Syvert Moen (*Smiley*) passed thousands of people in Bergen. In decade after decade he was an early bird in the city center of Bergen asking for cigarettes and money with the repetitive question “Do you have a krone for me?” (Kjersti Mjør, *Bergens Tidende*, 15 July 2015)

*Smiley* and *Otto*’s routinized and embodied movements affected the Bergen city environment. They created an emotional meaning or experience through the bodily



Fig. 2. Argus “Smiley” stencil. Source: Permission obtained from Argus/argusgate.wordpress.com.

experience that is inherent in the expressive space of their body movements in smell, look, sound and gestures. Emotional experience is relational; for example, between the city of Bergen and Smiley and Otto. It is “an affective space, which is the space in which we are emotionally in touch – open to the world and its ‘affect’ on us” (Simonsen, 2013, 17). They were like street art paintings – shaping an urban environment, reacting with their bodies and with other bodies and eliciting emotional affect, both positive and negative:

Right back where I remember him. His stare always made me feel a little uneasy, like if he knew a secret I was hiding from myself. This caused some introspection on my behalf, and just those encounters are vital to the civilizing effect of public space (Argus, argusgate.wordpress.com )

Smiley has also been part of the city for me, I remember him first from my high school time. I have always been a little afraid of him, and I have noticed that he is dirty. (Personal communication with Lene, 15 September 2016)

I wonder if Otto had a backache. I thought about the stairs at the Cafe Opera where he ate soup there ‘everyday’ (Personal interview with Iselin, 3 October 2016)

Their affective bodies – their strong smell and expressive looks – made passersby stop, spell out, took over and transfixed their thoughts and senses. When I myself met Smiley in the streets, his body affected me and my thoughts were transfixed: sometimes I thought about his personal story, which I once heard about; sometimes I felt badly that I did not give him money and sometimes I felt sad or surprised.

Otto and Smiley created instant meanings and everyday spatial production by walking and bodily and sensuously engaging with the Bergen environment. They shaped the everyday life of the city and their expressive space of body movements “engages in and emerges from ‘affective dialogical practices [...] born in and out of joint action’” (Thrift 1997: 128). Their repetitive practices, such as walking in the same tracks, and dressing in the same style, enabled the community to generate knowledge about them. They were part of the city, as evidenced by quotations from the public: “Smiley’ was one of the most known faces in Bergen” (Marie, *Skarpaas Karlsen*, 18 September 2015, *Bergensavisen*) and “many appreciated Smiley” (Siri Meyer, 18 September 2015, På Høyden).

In a *Bergens Tidende* article titled “Diversity Blessing” (18 December 2008), Ole Hamre expressed that Otto is an identity object for Bergen through his everyday practice in time and space:

If one asks himself what living individual represents most of the Bergen population’s sense of identity, I think it is the 80-year-old Otto. Otto Fredrik Wollertsen has had the street as his home for most of his adult life. Through his daily hunched wanderings through the city streets for decades, by bike, cassette player and harmonica, he has become a part of Bergen’s soul. And through his choice of existence, he has seen the world from a standpoint that almost no one else knows.

Perhaps Otto and Smiley became part of the place because they were locals, originally from Bergen. However, they also represented “otherness.” Kirsten Simonsen (2013: 12) describes “otherness” as “bodily and social experiences of restrictions, uncertainty and blockage.” Smiley and Otto’s lifestyle can be related to Lefebvre’s (1996) concept of the ‘right to the city’ – they are also very close to the essence of the philosophy of street art. Andrzej Zieleniec (2016: 10-11) asserts that graffiti and street art can be understood as an “expression or embodiment of Lefebvre’s cry and demand for the ‘right to the city’, the right to appropriate, appreciate, know and use its spaces and places (...) a free art or politics which challenges the normal, banal, functionalized and increasingly commodified and privatized space”. Smiley and Otto presented ‘the right to the city’ in the way that they challenged the legal, commodified space and functional space; they managed urban space for themselves, beyond the state, capitalism and consumer society. For them the streets were their living space where they could move and live freely. Although Otto and Smiley symbolize free expression of the choice to live on the streets of Bergen, Argus’s street artworks of these persons are now framed with Plexiglas. Walter Wehus comments: “It’s great that Otto and Smiley who are associated with cityscape of Bergen get a place on the wall but Plexiglas goes beyond the meaning of these characters” (personal communication, 8 June 2016).

Scholars have identified that tangible preservation techniques (such as covering an artwork with Plexiglas or Perspex) are harmful to street art or graffiti because those techniques stimulate cultural privatization, encourage vandalism, and break the ongoing dynamic relationship between the

artwork and the community (Hansen, 2016; Hansen & Flynn, 2015; Young, 2013). Uncommissioned street art and graffiti has traditionally fought for the urban commons and been intentionally accessible. Framing street artworks deprives citizens of the right to experience them (in the public space and ephemerally) in daily life and the broader right to engage with the city; it stimulates the privatization and commodification of culture, which uncommissioned street art and graffiti nature is against.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has suggested that street art could be conceptualized as a heritage experience in relation to embodiment, affect and everyday performative practice. I have argued that street art and graffiti does not represent a dichotomy between tangible and intangible or people and object, but instead represents an inseparable relationship. Street art and graffiti coexists between cultural and socio-materials in everyday life; to ignore this is to ignore the function of street art. Street art is temporary and changeable by nature. But its temporal nature is not necessarily negative, and not all street artworks should be preserved. Photography, video, websites and other forms of communication can be used to document street art. On the other hand, Peter Bengtsen (2016: 427) points out that street art “works only in a certain context, when this context is lacking, the artwork is nothing.” A street artwork might have a strong link to a particular public space; for example, it might contain a particular message that cannot be applied to another location. The notions of embodiment, affect and everyday practice might provide a framework for identifying which street artworks function within the context of a community. I have illustrated that the *Otto*, *Smiley* and *What Do You See* street artworks have a local base; they are embodied within particular locations, each with exceptional significance for Bergen. The removal of street art can be a source for the realization of specific experiences or experiential connections to a place. It also has the potential to transform the individual and the place by introducing new qualities into the environment. The removal of street art can also alter the dynamic relation between the community and the street artwork. A lack of knowledge about this dynamic relationship between the physical context and the community can lead to a street artwork being removed, and, with it, the experiential, emotional and sensory values from everyday life that it offers. More-than-representational theory can help us to understand and to study the embodied relationships between street art cultures and various publics, and the sense of meaning and belonging involved. It can also

serve to decode the embodied meanings of a street artwork and its relationship with the local community and the physical environment.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank John Pløger and Jonny Aspen for the valuable comments and contributions to this research. Thanks also go to Nipper John, Argus, Walter Wehus, Mania, AFK and Nimi. I would also like to thank to my beautiful colleagues at the department of Heritage and Society.

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## When documenting doesn't cut it: Opportunities and alternatives to intangible conservation

**Rita L. Amor Garcia**

Ph.D. Candidate. Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV). Valencia, Spain. Member of the Urban Art working team, Spanish Group of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (GE-IIC).

rita@cons-graf.com

### Abstract

Conservation of urban art is a subject in vogue in contemporary academic research. It may seem like a new topic of discussion – a new field of understanding – but the preservation of the ideas and forms of urban art practices has certainly been present since the very beginnings of graffiti and street art. Although generally practices related to urban art are considered ephemeral, when an artwork, style or general practice acquires value, conservation is the only way to prolong its idea – its life. The proceedings to allow that statement could be twofold: The first one is using intangible conservation mechanisms as simple as keeping the idea by photographic and video records; promoting spaces for the practices; documentation of styles, forms, ideas, states; developing new researches, and so on. The second, main topic of discussion in this paper, is the application of more intricate mechanisms when wider objectives are presented because of the significant importance of the artwork for the public, based on trying to keep the materiality of the artwork in addition to maintaining its idea. In these cases, tangible conservation mechanisms should be applied. This paper questions the limits of intangible conservation and the possibilities that tangible conservation could offer in the physical and conceptual preservation of the alternative contemporary art practices that involve urban art. Nevertheless, it is not forgotten that the application of conservation-restoration mechanisms could be questioned, so additionally to the alternatives that tangible conservation offers, the criteria used for its general application will be reviewed.

**Keywords:** Urban Art, Contemporary Art, Intangible Conservation, Tangible Conservation, Conservation, Restoration

### 1. Introduction

Ephemerality has been introduced to cultural and art tradition as an intricate concept that makes historians, curators, philosophers and especially, art restorers, become creative in the way that artworks and expressions with a transient life are presented to future generations.

In the range of ephemeral situations presented nowadays, we find ourselves looking at two groups: the movements and traditions that involve an action or practice, and the objects that those actions produce, or objects which are created to disappear. In regards to actions, their singularity in being part of the society in a particular moment of history makes it necessary to keep it the same for as long as possible, being

the action itself transferable to the future generations. This is what we understand as 'intangible conservation'. However, given the consequences of those actions for the object, the preservation of memory could be more intriguing. The object – artwork – could be preserved or not; if preserved, it could be treated either as a consequence/remnant of the action, or as an independent object related to the action but with its own character. In any case, conservation can be intangible, based on the registration and tracking of the different states of the piece (conceptual and material) and the documentation of the action which surrounded it, but also, 'tangible' because the work may be treated both as a remnant or as an independent object, which resides in the materiality in with it was created.

This paper focuses on the 'intangible' or 'tangible' conservation of the remains of contemporary art expressions like graffiti and street art. Discarding both technical reproducibility and creation of replicas (as new artworks) from this research, documentation resources have been the main and most used tool to accomplish the transference of forms of contemporary art such as short-lived artworks, performances and happenings, or cultural traditions and remarkable historic events for societies (intangible cultural heritage), among others. As a result, documentation is the primary and best adapted approach to perform intangible conservation. Nevertheless, what happens with those artworks created separately from the (art) tradition? Should we try to conserve urban art? How should we do it if those alternative practices have the idea of ephemerality linked to them? With regards to those questions, the main purpose of this paper is to analyze the current situation of graffiti and street art in relation to material conservation inside and outside the public space, and the possibilities that this approach has delivered to the field until now.

In order to accomplish this purpose, the research presented here has a focus on the limits that intangible conservation offers to these alternative manifestations of art, presenting case studies where material conservation has been applied. In addition, from the revision of those cases, the most significant aspects that facilitate conservation are identified, including alternatives based on respectful and correct conservation criteria.

## **2. Conservation of urban art**

From our perspective as conservators, we aim to treat any object that could receive heritage value as any other historic, cultural or artistic object traditionally understood and officially registered as heritage. If we transfer the concept of preservation of intangible and tangible heritage to contemporary experiences, we find that alternative artistic movements, such as graffiti and street art, can be deemed worthy of being presented as an interest on their own under those same principles.

Intangible conservation is always a possibility to maintain and disseminate the idea of something valuable, as it does well with the different stages a work or action could present. Despite that, it is the researcher's aim to go further into this matter: the value added to an artwork makes it, as we have

seen, not only accessible to intangible conservation, but also to the tangible. If the object is relevant enough to be registered, the preservation of the physical aspect of the artwork in a particular stage of its life may be possible too.

On the other hand, there are limitations in the application of tangible conservation depending on the kind of object/idea we work with. The limits that we could find in the material conservation of graffiti and street art are related to the artwork concept – created by the writer/artist – or the movement which surrounds it. So, when an artwork has received consideration as a valuable object by the public, which asks for its physical preservation, it is our duty as restorers to understand the objective established by its author and the historic and creative procedures linked to the environment in which the artwork was created. After that, we should evaluate whether a conservative-restorative intervention could benefit or damage the meaning of the artwork, the intention of the author and/or the availability of the work to the public.

### **2.1. Intangible versus tangible conservation**

Before developing the subject of the analysis of tangible conservation case studies, it is important to understand the ways that intangible conservation has, without a specific purpose, operated in urban art practices. Since graffiti writers themselves – and professional photographers as Martha Cooper or Henry Chalfant (2006) – tried to keep records of the best pieces (including promotional videos launched by spray can brands) the visual reproduction of the image has been the way authors and public used to be in the loop with the latest artworks, as well as with those lost recently or a long time ago.

It is commonly known that in the beginnings of graffiti, information was reduced to a few spectators outside (and inside) the movement, but thanks to, firstly the publication of fanzines, films, printed books, and last but not least, the Internet, any information old and new has spread worldwide. All these resources are the ways that current generations come across the beginnings and development of graffiti and street art; and so, the way all visual information is conserved. Consequently, photography galleries on the internet have become the best way for artists and public to share and delight in new artworks in the public space.

The internet has considerably increased the number of people that have access to this invaluable historical record, and at the same time, keeps that information preserved for longer. As Stephen Powers (2014:n.p.) wrote once about the demolition of some of his murals in Baltimore “see them TOGETHER now or see them FOREVER online.” In this manner, the internet is the biggest and most accessible gallery of artworks ever created. Furthermore, the written information linked to the images and thematic blogs is also useful. These complement basic information regarding the artwork and, in many cases, either add interesting facts or relate to specific topics, depending on the website, blog or community which organizes the space. This is how intangible conservation works nowadays.

By the same token, there are new proposals from both academic institutions and organizations that try to present new methodologies for acknowledging urban art practices, and for preservation possibilities. Consequently, research studies on graffiti and street art have been brought to the table much more often during the last few years. Academic environments find graffiti and street art a very rich topic of research from different perspectives – geography, philosophy, art, history, anthropology, or conservation. The multiplicity of fields increases the quantity and quality of the information that the public from diverse backgrounds can access; it also helps in the understanding of those alternative art practices and defines its situation within society and the art world.

The objective of the new researches that academic/specialist environments produce is to organize the information found and develop better work-models, closely related to intangible conservation. However, the same is being applied to other possibilities and the outreach is not only reduced to textual and visual information. Far from what may be thought, art conservation and restoration processes have already been applied to graffiti and street art, from Banksy’s detached walls and Perspex® protected stencils around the world, through repainted pieces like that of Does Loveletters in Abshoven, and right up to the conservation interventions done by the St.a.co collective in the streets of Athens and the recently full-restoration intervention of Muelle’s piece in Madrid. These are just a small sample of the many examples of artworks in which intangible conservation has been considered insufficient, nor even, in many cases, proposed.

Bearing in mind that the current situation allows for both intangible and tangible conservation of urban art, it is now the time to start asking ourselves what are the limits of each approach.

Intangible conservation only works in terms of the documentation of the idea of what the work was and the concept the artist wanted to spread, so it is complicated to maintain the real image of the artwork, and when lost, it will always be under an interpretation of those in charge of transferring the idea. In contrast, tangible conservation can preserve the real image – its materiality – which may give sense to the artwork. Despite this, its application can also contradict the concept or idea in which the artwork was created. That would bring us back to the intangible conservation, whose application would, in very few cases, contradict the artwork concept.

For that reason, if we want to apply tangible conservation to prevent the materiality loss of a graffiti or street artwork, in addition to the values added to it, we should analyze the extent to which the conservation would command the understanding of the artwork, conflict with the art concept, or show an ambivalence towards the artist’s will, before ever determining a plan of intervention.

### **3. Tangible conservation of graffiti and street art**

As we have seen, tangible conservation is currently happening. The value that urban art practices have taken, following public interest in them, has allowed for furthering the idea of delighting in alternative art forms. This new approach has gone from possessing them, to keeping them in the public space for longer than intended, with an extra concern for safety.

The interest in this and the lack of knowledge on how to proceed, have produced in the conservation-restoration research the need to broaden the limits that restoration theories offer, adapting the procedures used in conservation of contemporary art to these alternative forms. In this path of adaptation, new topics of discussion have been presented in academic environments: from theoretical aspects, such as if we should conserve graffiti (Orsini, 2012), through practical and focused projects in particular cities (Chatzidakis, 2016:18-19), to evaluation of the composition of the materials used in those practices, in general (Germinario et al., 2016) or in specific cases (Rava et al., 2015:194).

Other projects have been proposed outside academia as specific solutions for particular artworks. Interest in these new forms of conservation has mostly come from private companies related to the commercial art market such as The Sincura Group (2017), public platforms like Por la declaración de Muelle como BIC (García Gayo, 2010), or the owners of the buildings where the artworks are located.

As far as the conservation process is concerned, there is a wide range of possibilities for the preservation of urban artworks. For the consideration of the nature of the materials used and the environment in which those artworks are located, there are two paths that allow for conservation: ex-situ and in-situ interventions. From a neutral perspective, in the following research, the most significant mechanisms of tangible conservation to date are presented.

### 3.1. Ex-situ interventions

Ex-situ interventions start their action in the emplacement of the artwork, from where it is transferred to a lab where it goes through an in-depth restoration, and eventually ends up in a new location. The processes followed to accomplish that are mainly based in emergency systems of preservation used to avoid an imminent loss of the artwork because of a highly dangerous situation or difficulties presented in the environment (Hekman, 2010:9-55), like the so-called detachment, a transfer system used on wall-paintings and mosaics to separate them from the location in which they were created, taking them to a safer one. The majority of artworks where transfer systems have been applied in urban art are wall-paintings and the restoration processes used have been detachment by stacco a massello, stacco or strappo. Below, three cases of study where the three detachment techniques have been used are presented.

The first study presented relates to work produced by the artist known as Banksy. The fame and value of the artworks of this anonymous and controversial street artist has produced an interest for possession. In order to prevent the loss of his stencils on mural support, the wall-paintings are detached, transported and sold after an in-depth restoration using mainly the detachment by stacco a massello or stacco. Some of the artworks end up being available in galleries or itinerant exhibitions, others are now part of private collections as had already happened with his canvas or prints. The detachments have been done mostly by the

art and concierge services company The Sincura Group (2014), but there are other cases set by private owners, as with a mural in Beddington, Sutton (Gregory, 2009; Channel 4, 2011).

The second case study is the one developed as a part of the exhibition Street Art – Banksy & Co. L'arte allo stato urbano in Bologna. This exhibition was presented as an instrument to understand the ways cities communicate differently from the establishment (Roversi-Monaco and Sibani, 2015:7), as Bologna is one of the Italian cities with more long-lived tradition in urban art practices (Ciancabilla, 2015:9). All the artworks displayed tried to show an itinerary from the first contemporary graffiti expressions to the current street art, presenting works fit to be seen – as canvases or black-books – by international artists; and detached wall-paintings, from well-known Bolognese street artists. Those mural pieces were collected by stacco and strappo techniques from the streets of Bologna, restored especially for the exhibition, and are now part of the collection of the museum.

The third case is a lesser-known action of partial detachments made by strappo of some murals from Poliniza festival in 2010. As you may know, Poliniza festival is a street art event celebrated in the Polytechnic University of Valencia since 2006. The walls of some buildings in Campus de Vera, Valencia, are redecorated every year with international street artists and graffiti writers' artworks. At the beginning of 2011, as the 9th edition of the festival was approaching, two murals from the previous edition were selected for the conservation of some fragments before the wall-paintings were painted over. The detachments in this occasion were made by strappo technique only, its preservation being a complement of the documentation gathered of that edition.

Wall-paintings are not the only type of artworks transported from their original location to a new one. Sculptures, canvases, mosaics and ready-mades left in the streets are some of the objects that provoke a desire for possession from some people. Banksy is also an example of this, but there are many others like Space Invader. Space Invader (2017) highlighted the uselessness of stealing or buying the pieces he left in the streets as anyone can do similar mosaics by themselves. Although this is not specifically an example of a conservation mechanism, the idea of keeping the artwork somewhere away from degradation is apparent behind the will for possession.

### 3.2. In-situ interventions

In contrast to the cases presented on ex-situ interventions, there are also the in-situ interventions, a great number of which are focused on the conservation of paintings on mural supports, which are divided in two different groups.

The first to be presented are in-situ interventions when the main purpose is the maintenance of the artwork, meaning only conservation mechanisms have been applied. These processes would try to keep the artwork safe from external damage and in its best condition as long as possible in its original location.

The mechanisms used for such interventions are physical barriers like the well-known Perspex® (acrylic glass) or other chemical kind of barriers such as varnishes. In very few cases those murals kept in the public space have experienced other restoration processes as in many cases it can be complicated to find specialists or funds to carry out the restoration. The use of physical barriers is a common practice in British cities as London, Brighton, Torquay or Folkestone, but it has also been seen in other European cities – it was used after the restoration of the Madonna of Blek le Rat's Madonna in Leipzig, which will be explained in detail later. Regarding the chemical barriers, varnishes have been traditionally used for the protection of conventional wall-paintings. Even though, ordinarily it is not the purpose of the artist to protect his/her artwork and varnishes have been hardly used in contemporary productions, its application to urban murals seems to be an option for many owners, and sometimes, for artists. For that reason, in order to protect commissioned murals, synthetic varnishes – acrylic mainly – are the most used together with anti-graffiti coats. The combination of both would protect the surface of the painting against light damage and tagging.

In a second stage, there are in-situ actions to keep the artwork safe but also try to recover a lost aesthetic aspect lost. In these cases, conservation and restoration processes like cleaning, consolidation or reintegration, have been applied in two different ways: punctual interventions for singular problems presented or altogether full interventions related to the whole piece.

In regards to punctual restoration interventions, it is necessary to highlight the work done by the collective Street Art

Conservators (St.a.co) since 2012 in Athens (Staco, 2013). It is generally agreed that Athens is one of the cities most open to street art, so the work done by this collective responds to the same idea of public spaces. Although the interventions of this collective developed in the Technological Institute of Athens are based on the consolidation of posters and flaked painting, light cleaning and monitoring their interventions, in both public murals and street artworks (Chatzidakis, 2016), their contribution prolongs, for a short period of time, the life of some artworks left in that city. A similar study of materials on the difficulties of conservation was focused on a wall-painting by street artist Nunca in Vitry-sur-Seine. This research evaluates different aspects of the restoration mechanisms available to use on the mural, including the as removal of tags and the consolidation and reintegration of paint, both practically and theoretically (Matthey-Demoulin, 2014).

Other singular interventions could involve the reintegration of murals by the same artists that created them, like the one done by graffiti writers Does Loveletters and Nash in an abandoned church converted in a restaurant in Abshoven (Does, 2014) or some the murals by Kiz in Alicante. This kind of intervention can also be performed by collectives and by the public, as it is the case of Nekst in New York (Chin, 2016); or by the owners of the buildings, as with some of Banksy's stencils after being tagged or altered.

Moreover, there are cases where full-restoration interventions have been applied, since the artwork's appearance had suffered an important degradation due to different agents. Public organizations like the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles are trying to conserve the tradition of public murals and the aspect of the wall-paintings made for important artists and collaborators in Los Angeles (MCLA, 2015); similarly, the Keith Haring Foundation protects Haring's legacy around the world (2017). Last but not least, the interest of the general public has helped bring to the attention of the authorities the need for the restoration of popular pieces such as the stencil of Blek le Rat in Leipzig, which was funded by a private company after the a public request for help (LVZ, 2013), and the recently finished restoration of Muelle's piece in Madrid, as a part of a community proposal followed by the restoration by the Escuela Superior de Conservación y Restauración de Bienes Culturales of Madrid (Garcia Gayo, 2017; Colao, 2017).

#### 4. Criteria

This article has tried to highlight the reality of how the addition of, or rise of in, cultural or artistic value to objects is what brings them up to be considered for any type of conservation. The values that are linked to urban manifestations are, perhaps, similar to those presented by Aloïs Rielg at the beginning of 20th Century (Reilg, 1996). However contemporary researchers as Michael von der Goltz (2010), Alice Nogueira Alves (2014) and Isabelle Brajer (2010; 2015), have reviewed Reilg's work and propose some changes in the conception of those values applied either to the conservation of contemporary art or to alternative urban practices, which would need to be considered. Nevertheless, the most common values used in the cases exposed are: historical, artistic, social and economic.

It is undeniable that economic value has played an important role in the consideration of preservation of many of the cases exposed (generally those related to Banksy), and the application of this particular value can cause a conflict between what is the priority in the application of mechanisms to the artwork or what is the best for the owner; though it does not mean that other values were not applied at the same time – if a piece of created pieceion is not considered as recipient ofto hold artistic value, can it be called an artwork?

To prevent the application of incorrect – or untruthful – criteria in the conservation of urban art practices we aim to follow contemporary theories of restoration as well as the new deontological principle of ethics coming out like the one proposed recently by the Urban Art Working team of the Spanish Group of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (GE-IIC) (2016).

#### 5. Conclusions

We have seen that any new form of art or self-expression which appears freely in the current society has an incredible support behind it, as the public and many researchers nowadays are willing to be part of it. One of the theories in which some ideas are followed here – and as seen in many cases in the public space – is that an object is considered art when the communication between author and receptor is accomplished thanks to the (art)work, and the second analyzes it (Hernandez-Belver and Martin-Prada, 1998:46). This could help not only in the consideration of the artwork itself by a wider public, but also in its future preservation.

It is clear that some of the mechanisms for tangible conservation presented in the cases of studies above are neither perfect nor ideally adequate; also, the criteria followed could be respectful towards the artist or the public – and may be beneficial for only a minority of people. For all these reasons, we determine that it is our duty as restorers, historians, artists, philosophers or specialists in the subject, to develop our own criteria and opinions on what could be the best strategies for the conservation of urban art for future generations, trying to understand one another's opinions and ideas, and being open-minded of with regard to what we have got now and what will be coming.

As a final conclusion, I can say that – intangible or tangible – conservation is possible for urban art, and it does not differ from other forms of contemporary art. Despite this, urban art practices have special characteristics that need to be considered prior to any intervention in order to determine a modus operandi for the preservation either of the idea or the materiality of the work. This could be accomplished by understanding past problems, analyzing current situations, and keeping in contact with all those actors that were, are, or will be part of the story of urban art.

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## The wall is dead, short live graffiti and street art! Graffiti, street art and the Berlin Wall's heritage

**Sofia Pinto**

PhD candidate (FCT scholarship) at Catholic University of Portugal, School of Human Science | Lisbon, Portugal  
 Doctoral Researcher at University of Copenhagen, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies | Copenhagen, Denmark  
 sofiaodpinto@gmail.com

### Abstract

This article addresses some of the challenges faced by heritagization related to graffiti and street art, namely the changes in context and temporality that this process entails. In order to discuss these issues, I will frame the Berlin Wall as a paradigmatic case that presents a trajectory in time: I will follow the transition of the Wall from a deadly frontier to an obsolete structure and, finally, to a historic monument. I will argue that graffiti and street art are context-specific, and deeply affected by the symbolism and/or functions of the surface on which they are inscribed. Moreover, I will recognize graffiti and street art as practices situated in between tangible and intangible heritage. Particularly with the Berlin Wall, and in regard to the preservation of memory and heritage, I will suggest that graffiti and street art do not always enter the institutional circuit, especially when illegal and anonymous.

**Keywords:** Heritage, Berlin Wall, Graffiti, Street Art, Temporality, Context

### 1. Introduction

While graffiti is historically associated with vandalism and urban decay and street art has been rewarded with more acceptance both from public opinion and the art world, both practices frequently overlap and can be defined as mainly unsanctioned visual interventions in public spaces. Furthermore, graffiti and street art practices are normally considered urban, ephemeral, and context-dependent practices. In an effort to define street art, Nicholas Alden Riggle has argued that an “artwork is street art if, and only if, its material use of the street is internal to its meaning” (Riggle, 2010: 246). Although Riggle’s definition is debatable since it relies exclusively on the characteristics of the artworks, neglecting their social construction and place within the art world (Bengtson, 2013), it rightly alludes to the importance of the urban site for street art (and graffiti). In fact, it has been suggested that transposing such objects from the street to the gallery or the museum necessarily implies a loss, or, at least, a shift, in their meaning and relevance (Riggle, 2010; Bengtson, 2016).

Since memorialization and heritagization generally imply a form of institutionalization, the recognition of the role of the context and urban dependency for graffiti and street art are crucial when discussing such issues. Indeed, the preservation of the memory of a given community is normally ensured by the institutions entrusted with this task. In this sense, graffiti and street art, when faced with issues of memory and heritage, may integrate an institutionalized circuit that affects its meaning and temporality, in similar ways as its transposition to the gallery or the museum.

Moreover, issues of heritage related with these practices are complex, and, for this reason, graffiti and street art can simultaneously be considered tangible and intangible heritage. As Lachlan MacDowall suggests, “in its ephemerality, graffiti falls somewhere between tangible culture (heritage sites) and intangible culture (traditional music, chanting, performances or rituals and festivals)” (MacDowall, 2006: 474). In truth, while the tangibility aspect relies foremost on the objects that are created, graffiti and street art also involve practices, representations and expressions of a given community, that represent a more intangible character (Merrill, 2015).

In what follows, the Berlin Wall is discussed as a paradigmatic case in which graffiti and street art prove to be context-specific, deeply affected by the shifts in meaning of the structure, with special regard to the challenges of memorialization of past traumas. Despite changes in value throughout the Wall's trajectory in time, graffiti and street art, especially when illegal and anonymous, still resist heritagization, arguably due to its intangible and transient aspect, as well as its marginal status.

## 2. Cultural Heritage and the Berlin Wall Trajectory

### 2.1. The Berlin Wall – an example of cultural heritage's dark side?

Even though cultural heritage is often associated with the achievements of a given community, the relation with the past can sometimes be traumatic and challenging. In such cases, the preservation of memory is a way of coping with past traumas. The Berlin Wall is a singular yet outstanding example for such cultural heritage as it embodies negative values derived from a problematic and conflicted past. The purpose of preserving the remains of the Wall from oblivion is to prevent similar events from reoccurring in the future, besides paying tribute to the victims.

During its life as a frontier, the Wall proved to be a lethal structure: until November 1989, besides the drastic and traumatic separation of families and friends from East and West Germany, at least 139 fatalities were reported at the Wall (Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer, n.d.). This number excludes others occurring at different sites, not to mention the mental disorders that a few segments of the population suffered from – these disorders were known as the “wall sickness”. It is thus understandable that the preservation of such a negative icon was not immediately advocated for after its fall. In what follows, a brief history of the structure will be delineated, in order to articulate the role of graffiti and street art on the Berlin Wall.

### 2.2. Brief History of the Berlin Wall as a Deadly Frontier

Following the scission between East and West Germany, which reflected the tension between former allies since the end of the Second World War, the city of Berlin was divided into two parts, East and West. In 1961, during the night, the government of East Germany, mainly to prevent a massive migration of its population toward the West, closed the frontier with a barbed wire fence. This was the first stage

or generation of the structure that would later be called the Berlin Wall – or the “wall of shame”<sup>1</sup> by the city population (Ladd, 1998). Soon the border was improved with bricks, and another fence was constructed in parallel to the first in 1962, leaving an empty space in between. This infamous “death strip” was filled with raked sand, anti-vehicle trenches, watchtowers, and similar objects, systems and operations of surveillance (Laemmermann, 2012). In 1965, a third generation of concrete structure replaced the former generations and from 1975 onward, the fourth generation emerged – an even more sophisticated version of blocks measuring 3.6 meters high and 1.2 meters wide, lined with a smooth pipe (*ibidem*).

The Berlin Wall was a complex set of structures. As it measured more than 150 kilometers, separating the two halves of the city and the rest of the East German territory from the West, it is understandable that modifications and improvements were slow to be made, and that older sections of the Wall coexisted with newer versions. In addition to this, the Berlin Wall was not only one wall, but in reality two walls, both in East Germany territory, one facing West (outer wall), and the other East (inner wall), with a “no man's land” in between. Therefore, the Wall was a heterogeneous and ever shifting set of structures, which also included operations and activities of surveillance:

The security system was in its essence less a Wall than a controlled sequence of empty, visible spaces. More than that, “The Wall” signified a set of activities searches, patrols, observation, and identification checks at the crossing points that protected the border (Ladd, 1998: 18).

Unlike most borders that are constructed in the name of safety, keeping people from coming in, the main function of the Berlin Wall was to prevent the population from the East to migrate and/or escape the regime. Attempts to cross the border became increasingly difficult and lethal. In this context, it can be said that the Wall was a dangerous structure for anyone who tried to cross it.

### 2.3. The Wall's Trajectory and Graffiti and Street Art

As Andrea Mubi Brighenti suggests, walls are built with strategic purposes related to governmentality and territory that can be countered with tactical uses, such as graffiti

and street art (Brighenti, 2010). Even a dangerous structure like the Berlin Wall was subjected to such tactics and its surface became the object of visual interventions. Indeed, and despite all patrolling, transgression of the surface was possible on the outer wall, accessible from West Berlin. It can be said that graffiti and street art actions were fairly tolerated on the side facing West. Despite rumors of people disappearing at the Wall, only one arrest related to visual interventions was ever recorded (Kimvall, 2014). As property of East Germany, the East German authorities alone had the legitimacy to arrest and prosecute offenders on that border and, according to Jacob Kimvall, the police cared “less about people writing on the Wall, and more about the content of the writing” (ibidem, 2014: 92).

Although the famous and globally known landscape of graffiti and street art on the Berlin Wall, which served as a huge canvas, dates from the last generation of the Wall, that is, from 1975 onward, political writings were seen as early as a few weeks after the Wall’s construction. Indeed, according to Ralph Gründer, after the drowning of a refugee in the Spree river, not far from the western shore, and the shooting of another soon after the construction of the Wall, slogans such as “IN TYRANNOS”, “IHR KZ MÖRDER” or “DIE MAUER MUß WEG”<sup>2</sup> were painted in the west side of the frontier. These words accused the authorities and demanded the dismantlement of the Wall. During the first generations, most visual interventions consisted in political claims. Two reasons may explain the lack of more diversified actions. Firstly, the first three generations of the Berlin Wall consisted of various and different materials, uneven and porous, which hindered the use of paint, in contrast to the last generation of the Wall, which was smooth and white. Secondly, the emergence of the fourth generation coincides in time with the popularity and dissemination of graffiti as a practice throughout the world.

The golden era for graffiti and street art on the Berlin Wall was inaugurated by Jonathan Borofski’s artwork titled *Running Man* (1982), within the scope of an exhibition called “Zeitgeist”, promoted by the museum Martin-Gropius-Bau (Gründer, 2007; Henke, 2011). Keith Haring, Christophe Bouchet, and Thierry Noir were among the many artists who acted on the Wall, among graffiti writers, locals or tourists yearning for a piece of the action.

According to Lutz Henke, authorities regarded graffiti and street art as less dangerous than anti-communist slogans. Nevertheless, the activity was still illegal and, therefore, risky, which is why Thierry Noir developed his *Fast Form Manifest* (“Two ideas, three colors, and the image is done”, my translation<sup>3</sup>), in order to paint fast and efficiently. This attests to how the conditions for approaching the surface determined the (art)works on the Wall (Gründer, 2007). While some of the population considered the works of graffiti and street art on the Wall empty of meaning, Thierry Noir argued the contrary: “Everything you do on the wall is immediately political. Even if you just piss on the wall, it is a political act” (Noir, n.d: n.p). For the artists, the political function and symbolism of the structure imbued the visual interventions with a special meaning.

Although the authorities tried to whitewash the Wall to erase visual interventions, it became a common practice to intervene in the west side of the Wall. In the late 1980s the outer wall was completely covered in ink and paint. Most of the interventions consisted of scribbles, scrawls, and meaningless symbols (Gründer, 2007). In its last generation, not all of the actions on the Wall had an explicit political and resistance content; in truth, most were merely transgressive. In addition, the structure had integrated part of West Berlin’s touristic circuit.

Until 1989, while the west side presented a palimpsest explosion of colors and drawings, the east side maintained a virgin aspect, due to the repression of the authorities. According to Kenneth Bush, the absence of graffiti is as significant as its presence: “graffiti may be interpreted as a measure of the level of resistance to a particular political dispensation. Conversely, the absence of graffiti may be interpreted as an inability, or unwillingness, to resist the dominant political dispensation” (Bush, 2013: 169-170). In the case of East Berlin, it is more plausible that the absence of visual interventions on the Wall would relate to an inability to resist due to repression, as it was forbidden to get near the Wall, or even to take pictures of the border in East Berlin.

Everything shifted suddenly with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification of both Germany and Berlin. Indeed, what is called the “fall” of the Wall is, in fact, the drastic change of the meaning of the structure, which shifted from being a dangerous frontier between two territories to

an obsolete structure. The “murderous aura” of the Wall, to borrow an expression from Brian Ladd, abruptly disappeared and became inoffensive and harmless (Ladd, 1998). Whilst the Berlin Wall “fell” in 1989, the actual dismantlement of the structure took approximately two years to be completed. This event inaugurated a creative period of transition in the city.

As the meaning of the Wall shifted, the practices of graffiti and street art also changed drastically. A generalized euphoria was observed during the transition, in which the population actively participated in coloring the previously blank and inaccessible inner wall. What was once an illegal and clandestine practice became an act of freedom, especially on the east side of the Wall, as argued by Tim Creswell:

Graffiti, in this case [on the east side of the wall after its fall], represents desired disorder – disorder in a context that we are used to thinking of as overly authoritarian and orderly. In this context graffiti is associated with freedom and democracy – the Westernization of Eastern Europe and, inevitably, the end of Communism (Cresswell, 1996: 45-46).

Alongside the authorities’ actions, the civil population also took part in the removal of the structure with hammers and other tools. Fragments of concrete were kept, sold, and even sent abroad as if a piece of the Wall could stand as an amulet. The remains of what had been a dangerous structure became valuable. According to Brian Ladd:

Pieces of the Wall did indeed have a special aura: they were treated as holy relics that bespoke our deliverance from the Cold War. For that brief moment, the Wall was in demand precisely because it was disappearing. [...] These magical properties translated into its market value. The Wall, symbol of epic confrontation between capitalism and communism, became a capitalist commodity (Ladd, 1998: 8).

Graffiti and street art were actively included in this circuit of commoditization. Sections of the Wall that exhibited graffiti and street art works dating from before the fall were commercially more valuable during the transition period. Some were sold at exorbitant amounts, namely

a section with artworks from Thierry Noir and Kiddy Citny that escaped the fury of dismantlement and was auctioned with authenticity certificates. Moreover, fragments, however small, that presented traces of paint, were considered genuine remains of the Wall, the outcome of years of graffiti and street art practices. Even some postcards carried little pieces of the Wall. It is interesting to note that the practice of selling these “souvenirs” is still in force today, as observed by Alison Young: “The Berlin Wall can even be purchased, in small containers, at the Museum of Checkpoint Charlie” (Young, 2014: 79).

Although segments of the Wall are exhibited in countries all around the world, little of the former frontier survived in the city of Berlin after the transition period between 1989 and 1991. Only very few sections remain to this day where the Wall once stood. Examples include a segment next to the museum Topography of Terror or a long section in Mühlenstraße known as the East Side Gallery. In addition to the remnants throughout the city, a section was reconstituted in Bernauer Straße to serve as a memorial site. The lack of surviving segments of the Wall in Berlin can be explained by the need that the population felt to erase one of the most visible symbols of painful events: “It was as if the complete and permanent demolition of the Wall (either psychological or political) could guarantee history’s irreversibility”<sup>4</sup> (Senat von Berlin, 2006: 6, my translation). Indeed, following the dissolution of East Germany and the subsequent reunification of East and West, the obsolete structure of the Wall, seen as a hateful symbol of separation, death, and repression, was to be removed as soon as possible.

However, in spite of the widespread opinion that in order to cope with the past the Wall had to disappear, a civil and institutional movement (namely the German Historical Museum) in favor of the preservation of the structure was organized immediately after the fall. Without the effort of the preservationists, nothing would have remained of the Berlin Wall. Even a segment painted by Keith Haring, at the time recently deceased, did not survive the collective removal of the Wall (Ladd, 1998). Since then, the city of Berlin has approved policies and strategies addressing memory issues and recognizing that the legacy of the past should not be forgotten.

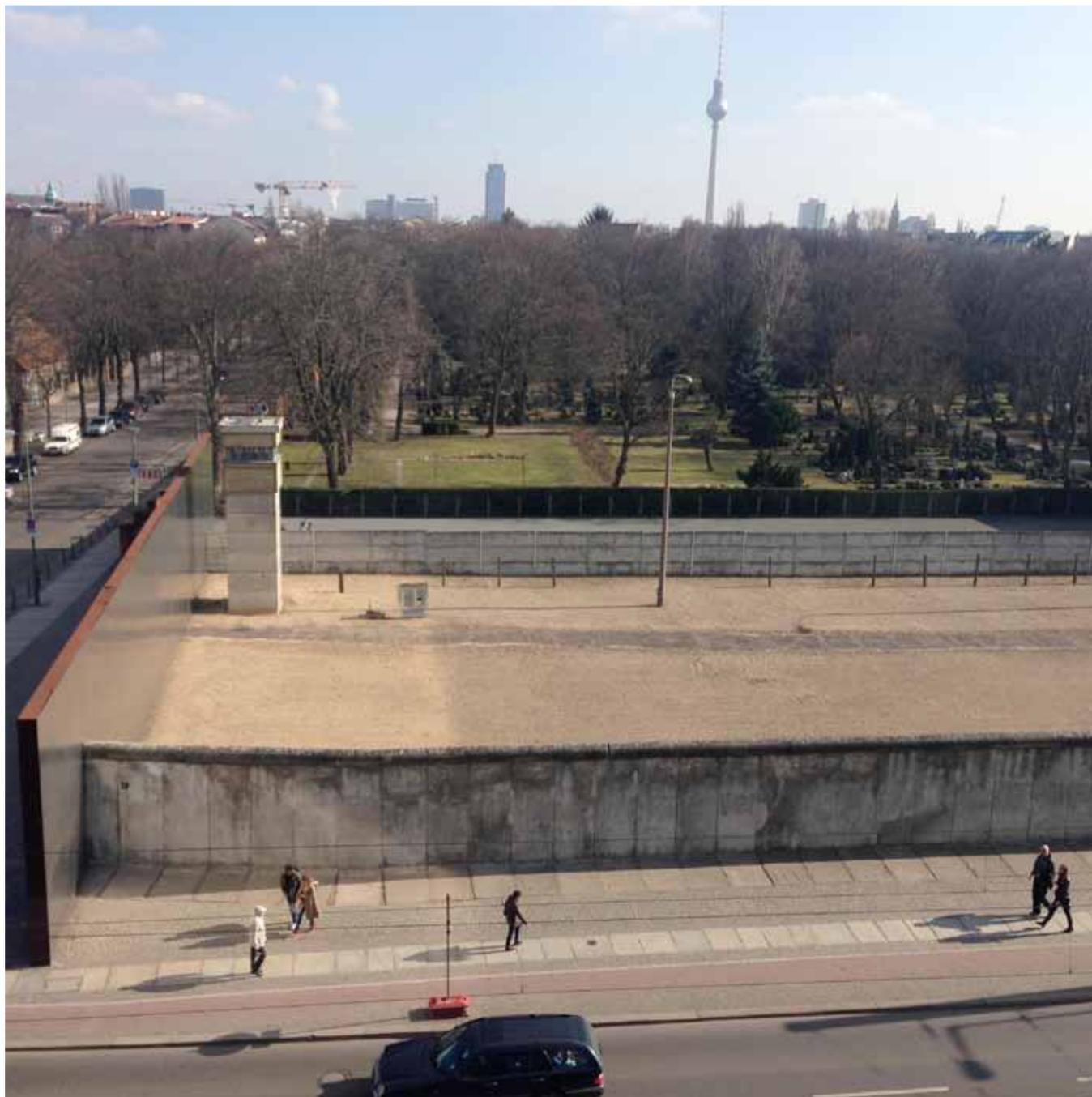


Fig 1. View to the Wall's Section Bernauer Straße, picture taken in March 2015.

### **3. Institutions of Remembrance and Heritage vs. Graffiti and Street art: a problematic relation?**

#### **3.1. Heritage as an institutional circuit**

For the purposes of this article, it is noteworthy to ask ourselves what place graffiti and street art currently occupy within the institutions and practices of remembrance regarding the Berlin Wall? How are graffiti and street art works generally (un)represented within the institutional circuit of the Berlin Wall heritage?

As stated above, little remains of the approximately 150 kilometers long structure in the city of Berlin. The authorities or the euphoric population either destroyed most of the Wall, or it was cut up, sold and shipped away. An example of the latter is the aforementioned segment by Thierry Noir and Kiddy Citny hosted in Manhattan.

According to Anna Saunders, the city of Berlin has maintained several locations for heritage, recognizing that claims “to unique authenticity or centrality prove unhelpful, for [...] it is clear that no single monument can ever represent the complex history and legacy of the Berlin Wall” (Saunders, 2009: 18). One of the main sites of the Wall’s heritage is the Berlin Wall Memorial in Bernauer Straße. It is the only place where it is possible to see a segment of the Wall with all its original components: inner and outer walls, death strip with a watchtower, light systems, etc (Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment, n.d.). In contrast to other preserved sections, the Wall in Bernauer Straße has been restored to the previous condition it was in before the fall, and it therefore does not present any traces of destruction. Moreover, the surface is clean on both sides, and thus the presence of graffiti and street art are non-existent (Fig.1).

Thus, while in Bernauer Straße visitors can observe an “authentic” segment of the Wall before its fall (although it was, in fact recreated), “original” segments still exist in a few sites throughout the city. For instance, it is still possible to see a few original segments and their unsanctioned visual interventions with a typical palimpsest quality in the streets of Berlin, namely in Potsdamer Platz (FIG 2), and indoors in the German Historical Museum. The section next to the museum Topography of Terror presents a surface pecked by the population during the transition period. These segments could arguably be seen as more “authentic”, in

the sense that they have not been restored and still exhibit the scars and colors of the population’s activities before and immediately after the fall. In other words, the section in Bernauer Straße, as an example of the structure of the Wall as a system, presents historic accuracy despite having been recreated. In contrast, the segments near Potsdamer Platz or the Topography of Terror stand as pieces of the original Wall that attest to the activity of graffiti and street art before and after the fall, in addition to its attempted removal by the population after the reunification of Germany.

Therefore, it would seem that the concept of “authenticity” in the context of heritage would depend on what period of the trajectory of the Wall the institutions of remembrance and memorialization aim to represent, and with which purposes. Despite the importance given to the colors, drawings, scribbles, and artworks before and during the two-year transition after the fall, such practices have nowadays nearly disappeared, even in the surviving segments.

In the document approved in 2006 delineating public strategies for protecting, preserving and highlighting the Wall’s remains, paying tribute to the victims, and securing economic issues (“Gesamtkonzept zur Erinnerung an die Berliner Mauer: Dokumentation, Information und Gedenken”) there are no mentions of the legacy of graffiti and street art on the Wall other than the East Side Gallery – which does not entirely represent these practices, as we shall see in the next section of this article (Senat Von Berlin, 2006).

Furthermore, during a visit to the Berlin Wall Memorial in Bernauer Straße in 2015, I noticed that mentions of graffiti and street art are practically non-existent. Graffiti and street art are arguably only celebrated as heritage at the East Side Gallery, despite their crucial role for protesting against the Wall during its existence as a border, as well as their brief glamorous status during the transition period of 1989-1991.

#### **3.2. Intangibility, illegality, and transience**

The larger portion of the Wall that remains on its original site is situated in Mühlenstraße. This section, measuring more than one kilometer, was, in fact, an inner wall, that is, a side of the Wall facing East, which means it kept a blank surface until 1989. Only after the fall did that segment of the Wall become accessible to the population. Therefore, none of the artworks on the East Side Gallery are representative of the period before the fall.

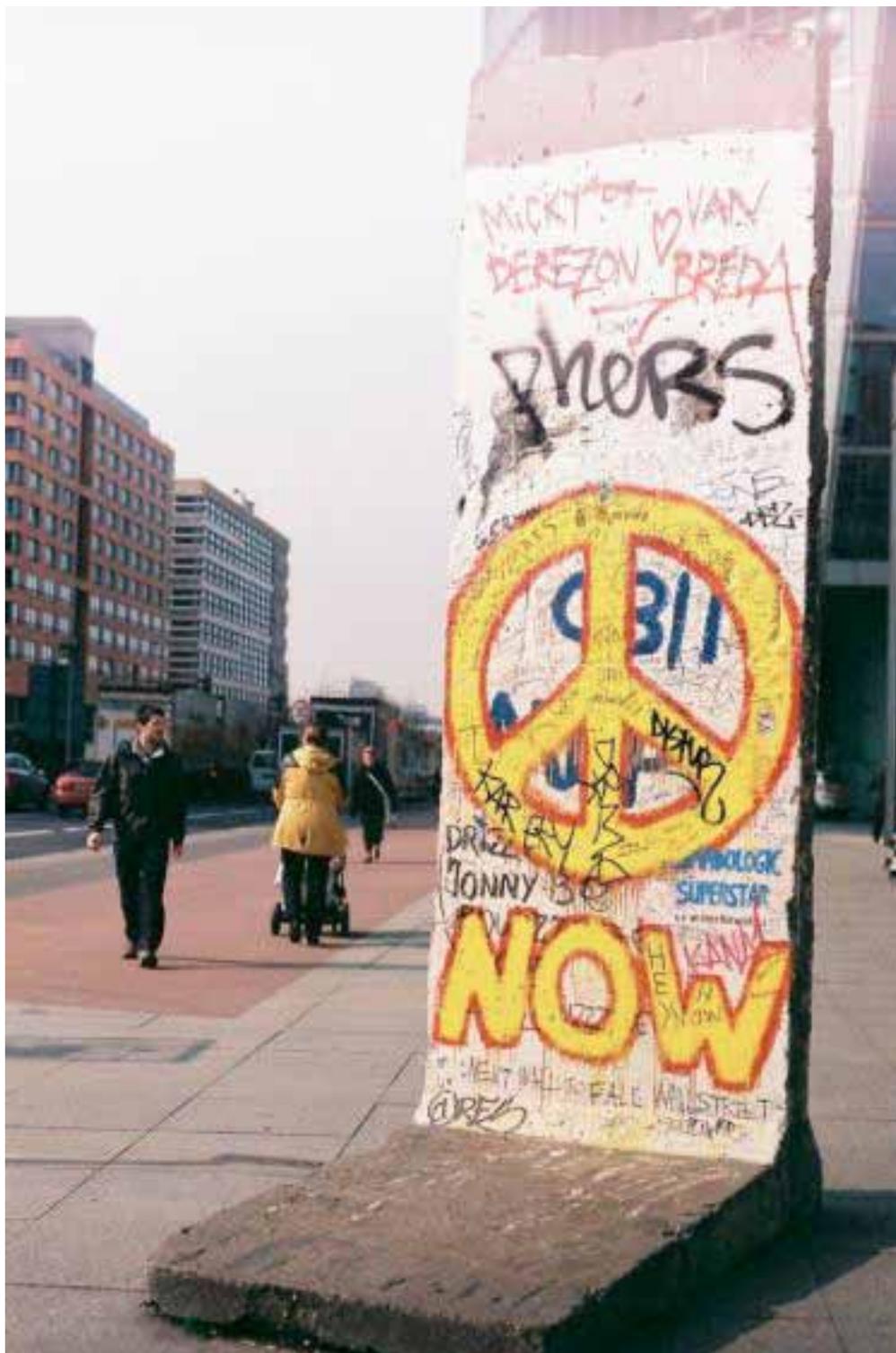


Fig 2. Original segment of the Berlin Wall in Potsdamer Platz, picture taken in March 2015.

In 1990, 118 artists gathered to paint on the surface in what is today known as the East Side Gallery. As an outdoor gallery, the artworks of this section of the Wall belong clearly more to the category of “mural”, since all of the works exhibited in the East Side Gallery are sanctioned and legally painted. The interventions are characteristically large and authored by commissioned artists. Although a celebration of the reunification of Germany and the end of the Cold War, the East Side Gallery could not be farther from representing the activities, illegal and unsanctioned, that were practiced on the surface of the Wall before its fall. Moreover, in contrast to uncommissioned practices, there is arguably nothing disordered and disobedient in sanctioned murals in general. Indeed, according to the official document “Gesamtkonzept zur Erinnerung an die Berliner Mauer“ from 2006, the East Side Gallery more appropriately represents the spirit of euphoria after the fall than the horror and suffering of the Wall. Two questions may then follow: what remains of the practices of protest on the Wall surface before its fall within the institutional circuit of remembrance? And what remains of the unsanctioned practices during the transition period from 1989-1991, since all works exhibited in the open-air gallery of Mühlenstraße are legal and commissioned? While the East Side Gallery surfaces preserve an important slice of the history of Berlin, playing a crucial role as tangible heritage, it would seem that only sanctioned practices of graffiti and street art were guaranteed a place in the institutional circuit of collective memory. Unsanctioned, illegal, and anonymous practices were, however, the majority of the production on the Wall surface before its fall and during the transition period. These practices are practically unrepresented within the heritagization of the Berlin Wall in the city to this day.

In 1993, the Gallery was considered as a heritage site that had to be preserved. As such, overwriting the artworks has been considered a forbidden practice, as shown in the sign below: “It is forbidden to deface or damage the Wall. Offenders will be prosecuted” (FIG. 3). Clandestine practices still occur on the margins of the murals, however. Where once the illegality to act on the Wall surface was due to an authoritative regime, it is nowadays derived from a noble need to preserve the memory and, most likely, to maintain its touristic marketability.

In addition to the institutional character of the East Side Gallery, the temporality of the artworks is very different than those produced illegally in the streets. As part of a cultural heritage, one could argue that the temporality of the murals on the East Side Gallery was artificially suspended. Already in 1995, the artworks in Mühlenstraße were starting to disappear and were since the object of restoration. In contrast to the practices of graffiti and street art on the Wall before its “historic status”, the murals in the East Side Gallery are there to last. While the former presented a character of “here-ness” that depended on transience, artworks of the East Side Gallery are expected to endure. Thus, the integration of volatile practices such as graffiti and street art in institutional circuits, such as of cultural heritage, alters its temporality and illegal status. However, it can be argued that it is precisely these features that mark graffiti and street art as relevant:

The feeling that an unsanctioned expression is not really supposed to be there and the knowledge that it could potentially be gone tomorrow may lead to a sense of privilege (or annoyance) from having come upon it before it disappears: it puts into focus the urgency of the here-and-now existence of the individual in a particular space, and it makes it necessary to take a stand in relation to the work we are confronted with (Bengtson, 2013: 76).

This discussion echoes Samuel Merrill’s argument that one can prioritize “graffiti subculture’s tangible material culture, namely its tags, throw-ups, and pieces, but their consequential conservation could be detrimental to the authenticity of the intangible ephemeral traditions that gave rise to them” (Merrill, 2015: 381). While Merrill makes a clear distinction between subcultural graffiti and street art, the claim may be relevant to the assemblage of practices that were once prolific on the Berlin wall. It would seem that urgency, critique, and ephemerality now belong to any other wall in Berlin. As suggested by Alison Young, the “Wall may be a civic gallery, a tourist attraction and a collection of painted fragments sold in small plastic boxes, but walls all over Berlin continue to speak of creativity, memorialisation and protest” (Young, 2014: 79). Indeed, writing and drawing as a practice, that is, as the expression of a community that has once been strong and relevant on the Berlin Wall must now be relocated to other surfaces.



Fig 3. Close-up of the East Side Gallery, picture taken in March 2015.

If, as claimed by Brian Ladd: “[r]emoved from a politically liminal space and a sense of transitory creation, the Wall became a mere ghost of its former self” (Ladd, 1998: 36), what remains of graffiti and street art practices on its surface froze in time, gaining the relevancy of heritage, but also losing something of itself.

Nevertheless, as the events that culminated in 1989 become more distant in time, the preservation of the past may become more fleeting to hold. In 2013, for instance, a civil movement gathered against the removal of segments of the East Side Gallery planned for the construction of luxury apartment complex, attesting the city’s gentrification (The Guardian, 2013). Unfortunately, protests were not able to prevent the action, putting the future of the open-air gallery at risk. With time, the challenge of not forgetting may become more acute than ever.

#### 4. Conclusions

While heritage concerns have shifted “from ancient monuments to living cultures” (Jokilehto apud Merrill, 2015: 381) or, in other words, from the tangible to the intangible, a few practices – such as graffiti and street art – remain categories. This may be one of the reasons why the process of heritagization is particularly challenging in regard to graffiti and street art. Moreover, these practices are particularly sensitive to context changes. As argued with the Berlin Wall case, the impact, role, and importance of graffiti and street art depend on the changes in meaning, value or symbolism of the structure on which they are inscribed.

As practices, graffiti and street art on the Berlin Wall before and immediately after its fall consisted in an act of freedom that ranged from resistance and disobedience, to mere transgression. The role of graffiti and street art, however, has become ambivalent after the remains of the Wall were granted the status of monument. Regarding graffiti and street art, heritagization may, on the one hand, produce a change in context, being itself part of an institutionalized circuit; on the other hand, a shift in temporality from transient to permanent contradicts the nature of these practices.

In the case of the Berlin Wall, most of its graffiti and street art were dismissed from the institutional circuit of remembrance, especially unsanctioned, anonymous and illegal works.

#### Notes

1. “Schandmauer” in German.
2. The first is a reference to tyranny; the second means “you murderers” and “KZ” stands for “concentration camp”; the third can be translated as “The Wall must fall”.
3. In German: “Zwei Ideen, drei Farben, fertig ist das Bild”.
4. In the original: “Es schien so, als ob nur der permanente und vollständige Mauerabbruch (psychologisch und politisch) die Unumkehrbarkeit des historischen Prozesses garantieren konnte”.

**Acknowledgements:** I wish to acknowledge the Portuguese funding institution FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia for supporting my research. I am deeply grateful for the support and dedication of Professor Alexandra Lopes.

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## Curating urban memories in connecting communities

**Tuba Doğu**

Izmir Institute of Technology, PhD Program in Architecture, PhD Candidate, tubadogu@gmail.com

**Sevcan Sönmez**

Yaşar University, Art and Design Faculty, Department of Film Design, Assistant Prof., sevcan.sonmez@yasar.edu.tr

### Abstract

There is a worldwide growing attention on user participation in shaping urban environments in recent years. With the involvement of local authorities, civil initiatives and neighborhood organizations, it is possible to observe a similar attention in the formation of urban spaces in Turkey. Driven from this approach, this study examines the bottom-up transformation of a cultural space existing since 1960s in Izmir, Güzelyalı. To reveal the process of how civic empowerment operated, we simulate a remembering process and curate the process in order to make things visible. The process examines an urban installation to reveal narratives behind collective action through reading collective memory. The scope is to re-read the past in the present in order to generate new processes of civic engagement, and thus actions, in urban spaces.

**Keywords:** Urban memory, Collective memory, Curating memory, Civic action

### 1. Introduction

In its simplest form, memory is retaining and recalling recent or far past experiences often coming in oral forms and narratives. It is the act of remembering, recollecting narratives that inevitably are linked to space. It can be thought of as a feature belonging to an individual, nevertheless memory also carries a collective dimension because communities are shaped by the memories of their individuals. Within the context of urban spaces, memory transcends the individual perspective and becomes a collective phenomenon created by society. Hence society and collective memory hold a bilateral relation, the existence of one conditions the other (Halbwachs, 1992). What space evokes along with what time carries, establishes a dialogue verbally and spatially; and through cooperation, it becomes a powerful tool in uniting communities. As Maurice Halbwachs (1992: 33) suggests, collective memories are “selective, socially constructed, contained spatiality — a society’s memory is reconstruction of past.”

Yet, how can urban memory be curated so that it would transgress memory as a passive entity and be a transformative agent instead? In what ways can memory help in empowering civic activities, and triggering collective motives and actions?

And how can the curation of memory be a transformable, playable and mobile performance? This article examines a way of curating memories in a neighborhood located in Izmir, Turkey. The 1960s were the years when cultural experiences engaged the community through open and enclosed movie theatres scattered around the city. Today, most of these spaces are either abandoned or demolished and have been replaced by tall apartment blocks. However, some of them still preserve their cultural values today. This article evolves from this point, and addresses the transformation process of a neighborhood movie theatre into an active cultural center.

To reveal the process of how civic empowerment operated, we simulate a remembering process and curate the process in order to make things visible. We propose an installation to reveal the narratives behind collective action through reading collective memory. In turn, we re-read the past in the present in order to generate new processes of civic action in urban spaces. This article presents the Memory Box project generated around Güzelyalı Cultural Center, located in Izmir. Although the design product has started as a mobile vehicle to collect the stories of the cultural center, formerly known As Movie Theatre, six months of archival research and oral history studies concluded with a short movie which is based

on the stories of transformation reflecting how these stories are attached to place, and how neighborhood residents acted with a collaborative and participatory understanding.

### 1.1 Memory – Collective Memory

Although the subject of memory is widely recognized in the field of psychology, it remains multidisciplinary due to its conceptual relevance with the human. In many fields such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, social sociology, architecture, history, political sciences and educational sciences, memory holds various definitions, approaches, researches and discussions. Memory encompasses such various fields from far past till today, especially by being exposed to transformations each decade since the beginnings of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Draaisma (2007: 101–102) states that, “this image of memory as a flock of pigeons is far removed from the quantifying observations of neuroscience, but it is strikingly lively and accurate nonetheless. It portrays the classic muse, Mnemosyne, in a different guise, demonstrating how erratic, capricious and violent memory can be. Memories are not something we necessarily control: often it’s the memories that control us, and in doing so, determine our self-perception and behavior.” Despite the fact that memory was first exposed to wide attention in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, conceptual discussions around the subject have occurred since the ancient Greeks. Memory has also long been a prevalent issue in the social sciences and humanities. As well, as stated by many authors, memory is especially significant to understand society, in particular how society recollects the past – because individual memories construct a society’s memory when they come together.

Halbwachs (1992: 22) states that “social memory is not a given but it is a constructed notion”. Thus, collective memory features an engagement with the community. It is a process of remembrance, holding ties with the community and forming a communal point of view rather than an individual ceasing to exist on her own and creating individually. What Halbwachs emphasizes about collective memory attributes a greater importance to social groups. According to him:

... It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories. If we enumerate the number of recollections during one day that we have evoked upon the occasion of

our direct and indirect relations with other people, we will see that, most frequently, we appeal to our memory only in order to answer questions which others have asked us, or that we suppose they could have asked us.... (Halbwachs, 1992: 38)

For Halbwachs, in a society or a group, memory is being shaped with other people’s recollections. It is not an individual happening to remember the past events.

Most of the time, when I remember, it is others who spur me on; their memory comes to the aid of mine and mine relies on theirs. There is nothing mysterious about recall of memories in these cases at least. There is no point in seeking where they are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them... (Halbwachs, 1992: 38)

According to scholars of memory, remembering is never an individual notion. Similarly to Halbwachs, Shudson asserts that there is no such a thing as an individual memory. For him, “Memory is social. It is social, because it is primarily located in the institutions; with rules laws, standardized applications with the cultural practices, more than individual human minds.” (1997: 346) According to the vast majority of great thinkers, belonging to a community, building a common ground on the community’s common memories, experiences cease to be features of collective memory. How to remember the past, decipher and comment upon it is a construction that is collectively managed with the people who formed and experienced that particular past. Connerton (1999: 10) suggests that it is by default, an implicit rule among people who manage a life within a community have common memories. If individual memories differ than collective memories and memories in common, then there are neither common experiences nor common assumptions. To accept the common past means accepting to be a member of a community hence be part of its culture, identity, traditions, beliefs, experiences and acceptances forming a common memory that the community holds. Because, belonging to a community means to accept the common norms and behave within these norms.:

Memory is also social because remembering does not take place in a social vacuum. We remember as members of social groups, and this means assuming and internalizing the common traditions and social representation shared by our collectivities. Moreover, collective memory constitutes shared social frameworks of individual recollections as we share our memories with some people and not others, and – in turn- with whom, for what purpose and when we remember, all of which contributes to what we remember.

(Misztal, 2003: 12)

Memory is a dynamic phenomenon having impacts upon the commons, past and present conditions of people belonging to a community. It is always being constructed and reproduced by the form of remembering.

As Nora (2006: 19) explains, “memory is the life itself that is produced by the living groups. For this purpose, memory is on the dialectic of recollection and forgetting, which is always under a development and changing.” Collective memory encompasses individual memories and remembrances. It is a condition that even holds the individual remembrance as collective, based on the fact that individual memories are situated in a community thus collective memory encompasses all forms of memory:

No matter how individual it is, each remembrance has ties with the cluster of thoughts belonging to other individuals; it actualizes with people, places, histories and words, that is all the tangible and intangible components which make us become a part of a society. (Connerton, 1999: 60)

In *The Ethics of Memory* (2002) Avishai Margalit inquires into various forms of memory and distinguishes shared memory and common memory. Margalit explains through various instances about how collective remembrance occurs, and how communication between people effect the process of remembrance:

A common memory, then, is an aggregate notion. It aggregates the memories of all those people who remember a certain episode which each of them experienced individually. If the rate of those

who remember the episode in a given society is above ascertain threshold (say, most of them, an overwhelming majority of them, more than 70 percent, or whatever), then we call the memory of the episode a common memory – all of course relative to the society at hand [...] A shared memory, on the other hand, is not a simple aggregate of individual memories. It requires communication. A shared memory integrates and calibrates the different perspectives of those who remember the episode – for example, the memory of the people who were in the square, each experiencing only a fragment of what happened from their unique angle of events- into one version.... Other people in the community who were not there at the time may then be plugged into the experience of those who were in the square, through channels of description rather than by direct experience. Shared memory is built on a division of mnemonic labor (Margalit, 2002: 52).

There are memories peculiar to each and every space. Scholars of collective memory entity assert that memory is triggered by different happenings, symbols, and statues of places, and that it can be activated spatially. The question of how societies remember – which is also the name of the book written by Paul Connerton – is being answered through various aspects. Social symbols, memorial days, statues, and main squares of cities refer to past happenings and lead to remembering. Based on the assumption that shared memory is disseminated, improved, and reignited through collective communicative realms, this study interrogates the implementation of a process of remembrance attributed to a particular neighborhood, yet not restricted to a particular space. The *Memory Box*, which this text specifically addresses, offers a social platform over an interactive interface in where the urban residents and particularly the target group of neighborhood inhabitants can share their memories at a collective level. Hence, the way to reveal these memories through making them publicly visible and communal is the main focus of this study.

## **2. Culture in memory: As Movie Theatre**

Located in Izmir Turkey, the Güzelyalı neighborhood has been selected as the pilot study area for various reasons: it is located in one of the main districts in the inner city and

has a community coming from various socio-economic backgrounds. Over time, welcoming Levantine communities from west in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and rural immigrants from the eastern part of the country in late 20<sup>th</sup> century, today the neighborhood has a well-mixed population celebrating different cultural backgrounds. Apart from the shifting communities becoming rooted over time, exposure of the neighborhood's physical scene with regards to the transformation in the built environment offers us various cross-sections of collective memory. Particularly, developing the study by focusing on the cultural cross-sections in memory offers us findings referring memories and the ways of remembrance of each individual, as well as mutual memories regarding the neighborhood. Memories of space are through the memories of this particular neighborhood's cultural places. Driven from this claim, the study selects the former 'As Movie Theatre', which is the current 'Güzelyalı Cultural Center', and develops this particular space.

The 1950s were the years when cultural experiences were disseminated through open, semi-open and enclosed movie theatres. During the same years, As Movie Theatre started operating as the first enclosed movie theater of the Güzelyalı neighborhood in Izmir. Ran by a private enterprise, the movie theatre was known for locals lining up in long queues in front of the structure to watch both national and international movies one after another. Those were the times when national Yeşilçam movies were popular, the times of wooden chairs and fizzy drinks.

Beginning in the 1970s, both with the regeneration of buildings and television entering homes, cultural structures as such became either less visited, losing their cultural value, or were demolished and turned into tall apartment blocks. Nevertheless, although As Movie Theatre lost its original function, it resisted becoming a dead space by hosting local cultural and art activities for the neighborhood residents. Despite the fact that the Municipality was the predominant figure in supporting the process of functional transformation, the space was kept alive by the active engagement of neighborhood residents. Being one of the regular attendants from those times, "As (means unique in Turkish) Movie Theatre meant unity for us residents" states Sabri Ozazar; as understood from its name, this uniqueness was rooted in social connections sustained over time.

## 2.1. Transformation of the cultural structure

In 1986, Konak municipality, which is responsible for the neighborhood, expropriated As Movie Theatre and transformed the existing private structure into Güzelyalı Cultural Center to be operated as the first cultural center in the area. Despite the spatial incapacity, cultural activities found life in the old cinema structure that originally had a single meeting hall covered with wooden interior claddings and a balcony which extended through the main stage. The stage was no longer showing any movies, but was hosting ballet classes. The balcony was readjusted with a different spatial organization, and started hosting ceramic and other handcraft ateliers with scattered tables and chairs all around. The building was an urban ruin with pigeons entering through the roof and flying inside, and there was no daylight inside as the structure was originally meant to operate as a movie theatre. Along the hall on the way to the boiler room in the basement, people were attending patchwork classes and rehearsing musical instruments. Despite all the disadvantages the building had, inhabitants had numerous successful annual exhibitions, and it was the activities that were adapted to the space over years, not the space adapting itself to the activities. Sabri Ozazar, as one of the old inhabitants, explains the conditions back then in his own words:

People were yearning things, they were willing to make their children to ballet classes back in those times [meaning 1980s]. Those were the times when opera came to the city, they were plays, and you were able to follow movies on the TV rather than going to the movie theatres... People were eager to make their children getting that cultural background. One again, there were several stage plays prepared by the schools, yet there were no spaces to display. They were asking to display at the stage of this ruined structure, during those times. We were asked to host them for the annual events. Seeing all these happening, and of course with the support of the municipality but mostly by the help of the neighborhood residents, we reconfigured the stage with wooden balustrades and made the space available for ballet classes. This was our beginning.

In the beginning of the 1990s, there were 180 registered people, however today 1800 people are members of the same

space. Since the increase in the contents of the activities, their frequency and the number of people attending, the existing structure became insufficient to host either the activities or its users. Therefore, to overcome the spatial insufficiency, in 2003 the municipality bought the adjacent land and in 2006 the existing structure was demolished and reconstructed with the empty lot next door. Since then, it is not the people who are adapting themselves for what the building's spatial capacity used to allow, rather the space that the new structure allows is adjusting itself regarding the cultural events.

### 3. (Re)minding space

This experimental project is about a public collective memory installation. As Daniel N. Stern (2004: 33) states in his works, here the past holds center stage and all participants (on and off screen) are players.

The brief history mentioned above may seem uninteresting at first glance. However, when the memory of a space is explored and thus revived through its frequent attendants, who are at the same time neighborhood residents, it becomes vital. Civic initiation is integral to both spatial and cultural transformation, and thus we follow a bottom-up process rather than a top-down approach, as the basis of the research generated around this specific cultural center. It is a fact that nowadays in Turkey cultural centers are often operated as wedding halls, or urban residents are not acknowledged in decisions about the existence of these centers in their neighborhood, and even if they are, they barely visit. Throughout our initial research, we have encountered over a hundred neighborhood scale cultural centers in the whole city of Izmir. These centers, which are often called district halls, culture halls, youth centers, training centers, and cultural centers are often run by municipalities and rarely by private initiatives. What makes Güzelyalı Cultural Center unique in this study is that both the space and the activities the space hosts is beyond a service for the neighborhood residents. On the contrary, the contents of the activities, and even their frequency, are organized by the neighborhood residents:

In times when municipalities were not in charge of running public courses, this center organized courses for young and elderly people. We asked for festivals from the municipality. They used to

organize festivals in the city center back than. And we said that we wanted in our neighborhood too. And we managed to achieve running seven festivals over seven years. All these achievements were the step by step achieved results by students and people who devoted their energy for the center. (Güven Yatu, Neighborhood Resident)

We started running piano classes by the self-sacrifice of a teacher and a piano we brought here from a local's house. You see, what we see today is because of our small but big self-sacrifices. (Sabri Ozazar, Neighborhood Resident)

"It was financially hard to take private classes those days. Yet, with the opening up of the conservatoires, students who graduated from there came to the center to give classes for free to the locals. They were encouraged by the residents. These were big steps" (Salim Cetin, President of the Cultural Center)

"On the other hand, municipality asking the demands of the people here have always motivated us. Since there were so many demands at all times, the municipality was always feeling a pressure in pursuing our demands." (Güven Yatu, Neighborhood Resident)

Extending over twenty-five years of operation, before and after the physical transformation, we see that the cultural center formed its own community:

Families who used to bring their children back in the old days, nowadays bring their grandchildren." (Günes Kiper, Neighborhood Resident)

It is observed that the space does not only become activated during the ongoing events and activities, but also is a meeting hub in everyday life. Apart from the administration units, rooms assigned for courses and the main hall which holds theatrical and musical performances regularly, the main foyer is continuously busy with people sipping their drinks and chatting and the reading room upstairs is constantly occupied by elderly inhabitants who come to read newspapers everyday.

### 3.1 Urban memory carried towards the future as a mobile vehicle

Stories collected through the method of oral history. Comprising the initial phase of this research, stories were videoed and through a digital program they were clipped and reorganized under various titles in sequence such as (1) Güzelyalı neighborhood life, (2) As Movie Theater, (3) The period when As Movie Theatre lost its original function and was left abandoned, (4) a bottom-up demand for cultural activities, (5) spatial insufficiency with the re-functioning of the existing structure, (6) demolition of the old movie theatre and construction of the new cultural space, and (7) current life and ongoing activities in the cultural center. The stories that were stitched together with this sequence were presented at the park next to the cultural center. Instead of screening at the enclosed foyer of the cultural center to its regular attendants, the stories were screened in a public space in

order to reach more people and acknowledge them as well as continue to recollect memories from the volunteer residents.

The screening of the video and the process of recording stories simultaneously took place in the inner and outer facades of a box constructed out of OSB panels. We called this the Memory Box, where a maximum of three people can fit in at the same time. Designed as a mobile installation system, video obtained from the oral history study was projected over an inner surface, whilst in the meantime its outer skins were forming backgrounds to voice record or shoot new stories. Thus, a visitor who approaches the Memory Box through the sounds of the park, enters the box and starts to hear the sounds of the past. The video inside starts with the period of As Movie Theatre and informs the visitors of the box about the transformation period underlined with the themes mentioned above.



Fig. 1. The current view from the Güzelyalı Cultural Center

Source: authors

With the above-mentioned features, the box turns into an object that activates shared memories. People revealed their particular stories regarding the past as well as maintaining a communicative ground which was revived thanks to these stories with the people who gathered around this object.

What makes this project experimental is that the stories which were initially recorded and then decomposed/recomposed did not remain as a mere passive video archive, but we managed to expand the material memory and made the existing memories visible by the joined new memories.

Collecting stories and making them public is both widespread and popular nowadays. Often showcasing through digital platforms, these studies are the publicized notions of oral narratives. Projects based in the United States such as Storycorps which started in 2003 and Humans of New York that has been actively running since 2010 could be given as instances highlighting new approaches to story collection.<sup>1</sup>

1. Storycorps, initiated by radionbroadcaster Dave Isay, succeeded

Unquestionably, these are successful attempts trying to meld together different techniques in both hearing the stories via voice recording, as in the former instance, or getting together the stories and images, as in the latter instance. Yet, these projects are still not relevant to urban memories and remain as stories at an individual scale. Having no specific space target, hence not attaining a particular reading of a space, they do not worry about having references to the built environment.

in collecting around 50.000 video recordings. The operation is as follows: located temporarily in different places over the city, a mobile vehicle which hosts at most two people is recording the voices of those people. Meanwhile a copy of recording is presented to the people participated, other copy becomes the property of Storycorps.

On the other hand, Humans of New York project has a different method. Initiator of the project, Brandon Stanton randomly interviews the people of New York and in the meantime captures their images. Stories are presented on the web site by including short texts directly cited from the interviewee along with their images.



Fig. 2. (a, b, c) Images from the oral history studies

Source: authors



Figs. 3 & 4. Views from the Memory Box during the urban public installation

Source: authors

In this sense, Memory Box may be distinguished from these projects by specifically referencing the urbanscape. Instead of having a passive reading of the transformation of a space, it tries to reveal how citizen initiatives were effective, and through a physical interface it eases the process of reaching people – which is often the challenging part of running oral history stories. Thus, this interface does not become a storage for memory, on the contrary, becomes a landmark by arousing the interest of the people. Sustaining the public life of the Memory Box and carrying on with both reflecting the stories and collecting memories remains essential in keeping the project sustainable.

#### 4. Conclusion and further research

With the recent increase in the number of urban renewal projects ongoing in Turkey, the built environment has been exposed to drastic physical transformations. Visible in urban everyday lives, studies in urban memory remain vital. As mentioned in the first part of this article, scholars assert that social memory is socially constructed and is shaped by different remembering occasions. In this project, the Memory Box has been used as a memory triggering object and it has been a place-space of memory. As Margalit (2002: 52) suggests, there are two categories of memory as common and as shared memory which we can remember; “Other people in the community who were not there at the time may then be plugged into the experience



Fig. 5. An image of Storycorps vehicle  
Source: Jorge Sanchueza – Lyon/Kut News

of those who were in the square, through channels of description rather than by direct experience.” Thereby, the Memory Box becomes the object of shared memory that unites people to remember and share their recollections.

In this sense, the project explained here may look like a standard oral history study at first glance. However, two features make this study particular; first, Güzelyalı Cultural Center has more distinguished memories than the rest of the cultural centers. Reviving those memories and protecting them is essential for urban memory. Secondly, the research brings in new tools and new methods in seeking alternative ways of memory collection on an urban scale.

Overall, through the project two things were experienced: not only were previously collected narratives temporarily made visible but the compiled narratives on site functioned to sustain the process of urban memory collection. Although the project was initially based on the transformation of the movie theatre into a cultural center, during the studies we encountered invisible stories transcending the boundaries of the building towards the scale of the neighborhood. Here, instead of generating a setup evolving around the collective memories experienced around a fixed enclosed space, versatile stories that shrink and expand in and over space by embodying multi-dimensional scale were given place. Thus, although the particular space of study plays a vital role in the project, still being remembered even with the physical transformations, it was exposed, thanks to the memory from past till today becoming a connector, sort of an adhesive merging time.

In order to evoke the memory of the neighborhood, Memory Box was built on the realization of a design product that in return had the capacity to revive collective memory. Meanwhile, by bringing people together, it opened a space of remembrances that had been actually formed for reminding. This was realized via the urban product that was not only designed as a receiver but also as a sender in stimulating and generating a field for further memory collection processes. Furthermore, by being displayed in one of the well-known independent art spaces of Izmir in October 2016, the project extended the actual neighborhood of study and was disseminated among many other Izmir sides coming from different parts of the city. In contrast to the memories performed inside the box during the public event in the neighborhood, the memories were intentionally displayed

elsewhere than the box and hence were scattered around the space where the exhibition was held. In this manner, shootings of further memories during the public event were added to the former oral history study and thus transformed into an art product. This did not only show the sustainability of the project but also proved the possibility of repurposing of the Memory Box in various spaces.

In conclusion, we acknowledge that this is a pilot study that offers us an experimental platform for how to stimulate processes of remembrances and read those over an urban public space. Memory Box presents us opportunities in this field in the long run. Paying attention to not only collecting memories but also to disseminating them, we aim at continuing the project by compiling further urban memories. Thereby, this study offered us a new method for performing oral history studies at an urban scale.

### **Acknowledgements**

Memory Box, which is given a detailed place in this article, is the outcome of a cross-cultural collaboration between Romania's second big city Cluj and Izmir. The project focuses on revealing the memories related to two cultural places from these cities and their importance for the urban life. Memory Box is the Izmir part of the project that particularly focuses on collecting memories of the inhabitants to reflect the bottom-up cultural transformation process. The project is kindly supported by 2015-2016 Tandem Turkey fund under the name “Connecting Comm(on)unities” and realized by UrbanTank, an NGO researching on participatory urban environments in Turkey ([www.urban-tank.org](http://www.urban-tank.org)). Both authors are in the leading team of this organization.



Figs. 6 & 7. Images from the Exhibition  
Source: authors

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## From 'either/or' to 'both/and': Some thoughts on graffiti and street art conservation, curatorial practices and the handling of cultural heritage

**Katja Glaser**

Independent researcher,  
50823 Cologne, Germany  
katja.glaser@gmx.net

### Abstract

The institutionalization of street art and graffiti has been discussed a thousand times. My article takes the next step and asks: Are we not simply in charge of reevaluating the 'interventions' happening outdoors, be they commissioned or not, and integrating them into (fine art) shows, exhibitions and museum collections – with no attempt to plexiglass? The long-term perspective might be an equal treatment of commissioned and uncommissioned artworks, as well as the appreciation and self-confident exposition of their direct and unambiguous linkage. This article includes interviews with Pietro Rivasi (Italy) and Robert Kaltenhäuser (Germany) and refers to the 'BLU controversy' in Bologna, Italy. The text was written with regard to an exhibition that took place in Herne, Germany, where I contributed as a curatorial and scientific assistant.

### Keywords:

Street Art and Graffiti Conservation, Urban Art Expositions, Urban Art Museums, Curatorial Practices, Cultural Heritage

### Essay / Working Paper

Research is directed by trends. Some years ago, in the early 2000s, the academic street art world – still a very young discipline, if at all – began to think about graffiti and street art in a more elaborate and differentiated way. In the beginning, the academic world discussed graffiti and street art's similarities with other art forms, their unique characteristics and tried to find (general) definitions – or let's say *one* general definition – which, in principle, was doomed to failure. By around 2015, the academic world focused on the challenges surrounding street and urban art festivals, the creative city and gentrification processes. Today, a new 'trend topic' can be observed: graffiti and street art conservation, curatorial practices<sup>1</sup> and the handling of cultural heritage – although, and I want to highlight that, these issues rightly take an important position on today's academic as well as cultural, art historical, and political agenda.<sup>2</sup> In this paper I want to address these topics from an academic point of view of, as this is my background. At the same time, I want to keep in mind my new position as a curatorial assistant. Thus, rather than giving a condensed framework of answers, I try to address some questions that came up recently while working

on an exhibition that took place in Herne, Germany, in May 2017.<sup>3</sup> My aim is to open up a debate and invite, encourage and inspire people to join the discussion.

One of the most illustrative examples to introduce this topic is the controversy that surrounded the exhibition "Street Art – Banksy & Co. The Urban State of Art" in Bologna, Italy, where artworks by Italian artist BLU were taken down by the exhibition organizers without the artist's permission – using a novel technique<sup>4</sup> – and put on view in the museum (Kordic, 2016). As a direct and (un)ambiguous answer, BLU removed all his remaining artworks from the walls of Bologna. The action was said to be an artistic protest against the organizer's decisions and larger political controversies in Bologna in general (Kordic, 2016, quoting Omodeo). However that may be, this is not the main point here. Rather, I propose to refrain from the individual case and focus on more general questions – such as: How can we (re)present and expose graffiti and street art in an institutional framework or art space, if at all? And, in the long run: "What could be the role of a museum in the next future of urban art?" (Kordic, 2016, quoting Omodeo)

As I already indicated, these questions are not new.<sup>5</sup> However, what is new is the context and most likely the socio-cultural, -political and art historical urgency to reflect on these questions. When brought into museums and galleries on canvas, street art and graffiti 'pieces' are accused of losing their spontaneity, freshness, possible site-specificity, material characteristics and aesthetics. This is one of the most popular and frequent accusations that street art and graffiti artworks are faced with. Therefore, curators and gallerists – by no means all of them – began to include photos and videos in their expositions (to somehow reveal the performative aspects of these practices), as well as sketches, notes, installations, sculptures and interviews. These kinds of works serve as documentary proofs and as (in)dependent artifacts, often with own artistic aspirations and qualities. Accordingly, we are faced with curatorial practices that have already been applied much earlier – let us just think of land art, public art or performance art. Historical precursors do exist. My colleague and curatorial partner Robert Kaltenhäuser used to say: “You just have to look at land art, a better example hardly exists. If you think of Robert Smithson, for example, did they put ‘Spiral Jetty’ into a museum? No they didn’t! But they used photography and video for documentation” (see also Bengtson, 2014; Kimvall, 2016; Kwon, 2004; 1997). There is no doubt that photos and videos do not fully substitute or replace the original intervention, but they are somehow part of its ‘afterlife’ and contribute to its ‘survival’.<sup>6</sup> If this is the case, and I’m convinced that it is, we should finally take the next step.

We all know that graffiti, originally, is an art form that is based on illegal interventions. While hosting an exhibition, it is not unusual for artists to also interact with the local streets. They leave their tags and pieces in the city while at the same time meeting the requirements of a fine art exhibition. In view of this, I therefore propose: *Why not simply invert the ‘BLU case’ in Bologna, somehow?* Instead of putting illegally painted artworks into museums, without the artist’s final agreement, we could simply reevaluate the ‘incidents’ happening outdoors, be they commissioned or not. The long-term perspective might be an equal treatment of commissioned and uncommissioned artworks, as well as the appreciation and self-confident exposition of their direct and unambiguous linkage. Pietro Rivasi, curator of the exhibition “1984. Evolution and Regeneration of Writing” in Modena supports this fact: “When hosting a show, we as

curators and art critics cope with the task of explaining that the most valuable part of the artworks done by ‘urban artists’ remain the ones done ‘unofficially’ in the streets. So if an institution wants to have this kind of art in a show, they must deal with the fact that it belongs to the streets.”<sup>7</sup> That’s one of the reasons why Rivasi<sup>8</sup> decided to include some of the illegal interventions that happened in Modena (during the ‘1984’ show) in the exhibition catalogue: a Fra32 piece in an underground train station and the “SI” intervention<sup>9</sup> by Zelle Asphaltkultur [fig. 1]. “These two pieces, together with the Olivier Kosta-Thefaine ‘Jardin’, are in the 4th booklet of the catalogue that is about ‘site specific interventions’”, Rivasi states, “one legal, two illegal; but with the same importance in the show.”

This pioneering example shows that we are definitely in need of more dialogic and entangled thinking. Artworks, be they commissioned or not, should be recognized as an integral part of the artist’s production, his or her artistic self-conception and the art form’s discursive framework. Therefore, we are obliged to foster some kind of ‘educational work’ on behalf of these issues. People need to be (made) aware that “what they can see on the streets, and usually conceive as vandalism, actually can be art”, Rivasi adds. In the long run, this approach may not only lead to a general reevaluation of ‘unauthorized art production outdoors’, but to their inclusion into (fine art) shows, exhibitions and museum collections – with no attempt to plexiglass them in situ. At this point, my argumentative setting comes full circle with the ‘Bologna show’ – and I quote: “If you do it [an exhibition or show, KG] properly, you should not only show the art, but the dissent that this art form essentially carries within its nature.” (Kordic, 2016, quoting Omodeo)

Although conservation is neither easy nor inexpensive – and a lot of people might argue that graffiti or street art should not be conserved, but exposed to its own dynamics on the street (crossing, buffing and disappearing included) – some actors have already begun to adopt a more long-term approach: Looking at Stockholm, Sweden, great effort was put into an attempt to protect an iconic mural called “Fascinante” which was painted in 1989 by Circle and Weird (Abarca, 2016). The initiative, headed by Tobias Barenthin and Jakob Kimvall, was successful: The mural was declared as cultural heritage (ibid.). In Madrid a graffiti piece (of Muelle) even got restored professionally, in a quite elaborate

and complex way, with the support of the government (Colao, 2017). And, on April 4, 2017, Pietro Rivasi received the municipality's official confirmation of the acquisition of the "SI" painting by Zelle Asphaltkultur: "Together with all the photo installation we used in the show, it will become part of the permanent collection of the city's contemporary art museum, the 'Galleria Civica'. Nevertheless, the 'SI' painting will be left in place, without protection, respecting that it was painted knowing that it was ephemeral and site-specific. The idea is to have an illegal painting recognized officially and acquired in a public collection", Rivasi explains.

You are invited to join the discussion.



Fig. 1: Zelle Asphaltkultur, Ex-Fonderie Riunite, Modena 2016. Uncommissioned wall painting.

## Notes

1. It must be highlighted that these topics, generally speaking, are not new; see for example Bengtson (2014), Derwanz (2013) and Kimvall (2016).
2. “[...] [M]useums will soon include urban art in the collections. However, at the moment, there has not been a real analysis of how that should be done”, Christian Omodeo emphasizes in his interview with Widewalls (2016). See also *The Grifters Journal* (2016a).
3. See Martens (2017): <http://inherne.net/ungenehmigte-malerei-im-alten-wartesaal/>.
4. The technique, originally invented in Bologna in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for restoration purposes (churches, frescos, etc.), allows to detach a painting from a wall and paste its skin on canvas (*The Grifters Journal*, 2016b).
5. See footnote 1.
6. Kimvall uses the term ‘chronicling’ to relate to the variety of photographic practices that surround an artwork. His aim is to emphasize that it is an active practice, not merely a documentary one (Kimvall, 2016).
7. A similar approach was applied in a street art exhibition that took place in Cologne, Germany: <http://strassengold.org/konzept.htm>. There, artists were explicitly invited to also interact with the local streets while being on display in the show – and they did. In return, there were no exclusion criteria regarding the exhibition. The only precondition was that they are active on the streets, on a regular basis.
8. In accordance with the artists.
9. “During fascism, in Italy there were some ‘public propaganda interventions’ that looked like ‘street art’. The ‘SI’ is taken from a Mussolini ‘propaganda work’, rendering an (in)direct commentary on rightwing dictatorship”, Rivasi explains. And Kaltenhäuser adds: “But it also works without the specific historical meaning, the bold ‘yes’ could be interpreted as an unconditional support of something.”

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## Heritales: The film festival that brings heritage to the urban environment

### Nicola Schiavottello

Phd Candidate in History, Heritas - FCT

CIDEHUS - Centro Interdisciplinar de História, Culturas e Sociedades da Universidade de Évora

E-mail: nschiavo@uevora.pt

URL: [http://www.uevora.pt/pessoas/\(id\)/37938](http://www.uevora.pt/pessoas/(id)/37938)

### María Zozaya-Montes

Postdoctoral Grant FCT

CIDEHUS- Universidade de Évora

E-mail: mzoayam@yahoo.es

URL: <https://mariazozaya.wordpress.com/>

### Festival address

Heritales – International Heritage Film Festival –

CIDEHUS - Centro Interdisciplinar de História, Culturas e Sociedades da Universidade de Évora

Palácio do Vimioso, Largo do Marquês de Marialva, n.º 8, Apartado 94, 7000-809 Évora – Portugal

Email: [info@heritales.org](mailto:info@heritales.org)

URL: <http://www.heritales.org>

### Abstract

The International Heritage Film Festival “Heritales” took place in the city of Évora, during the 30th anniversary of its declaration of world heritage site by UNESCO. It was developed especially for this symbolic event, during the months of its commemoration: between September and October 2016. The festival was born with the purpose of disseminating narratives of filmic, digital and graphic nature that deal with Cultural Heritage. Its objectives were to project in public spaces, as well as within the cultural facilities of the city such as churches and cultural associations. This aspect, framed in a community outreach strategy, have brought a stage of exchange and sharing between academia, the local community and international visitors to the city of Evora. The program had different forms of action: screening sessions with subsequent debates with the presence of the directors, parallel activities such as workshops, conferences, and other type of narrative forms through exhibitions and historical table games.

### Keywords:

Cultural Heritage, Festival, Cinema, Urban Projection, Community, Storytelling

## 1. Heritales, a new vision of the academia

The first Heritales – International Heritage Film Festival – was formally inaugurated on the 30th of September 2016 in Évora (Portugal). The place chosen was the main hall of the 16th Century Palace of the University of Évora so-called Palacio Vimioso, that hosts the CIDEHUS (Interdisciplinary Center for History, Culture and Societies). The festival was organized by an international team of researchers of this center: Nicola Schiavottello (Italy), María Zozaya (Spain), Sonia Bombico (Portugal) and Armando Quintas (Portugal). The opening of the conference was led by Prof. Ana Cardoso de Matos, the codirector of the festival María Zozaya and José Luís Santos, the author of the photographic exhibition “Rota da Seda” (Fig. 1). To spread the urban philosophy of the festival, the event took place in different public spaces of the city: The Palace “Palacio Vimioso”, the church “Igreja de São Vicente” (Fig. 2), the Association “Sociedade Harmonia Eborense” (Fig. 3), the old religious house “Auditório Soror Mariana” (Fig. 4), the old convent “Convento dos Remédios” (Fig. 5) and the ancient building that hosted the Moitebar (Fig. 6). Different local and international institutions were involved alongside the organizations that supported the festival, these were: the town hall of Évora, “Camara Municipal de Évora”, CIDEHUS-UÉ, UNESCO-UÉ Chair, and the Regional Cultural Head of Alentejo “DRCA”.

The festival had a worldwide breadth with a local focus: more than 30 guests were invited between filmmakers, exhibitors, professors and other specialists, animating debates of great interest in various fields related to know-how, material culture and musical sociability. Although the festival was especially represented by authors from the Iberian Peninsula and Portuguese speaking countries, it also included stories from the Check Republic, United Kingdom, Italy and Middle East and Eastern Asia. Different topics were explored during all the sessions of the festival ranging from historically based ethnological and anthropological documentaries to archaeology and popular culture. Various communication styles were presented, from more traditional media to new digital visualization techniques of archaeological sites in three dimensions.

The main event was concentrated in a long weekend (30 September to 1st of October), however different parallel sessions took place over a month before and after the festival, and provided film projection and debate with the

presence of the authors of the films. These moments of conversation turned out to be particularly engaging, and enriched the whole festival experience. For example, the projection of “Flamenco de Raíz” by Vicente Pérez Herrero, in the “Igreja de São Vicente”, had a very good response and the solemn atmosphere of the church in contrast with the chosen topic turned the event into an emotional learning moment about the real roots of the Flamenco dance (Fig. 7). Another very intense moment was the screening and debate in the presence of the author of the documentary “O Pão e o Vinho”, Ricardo Costa (Fig. 8). It showed the ways to make wine and bread in the region, ways of living linked to the songs of the peasants, “Cante Alentejano”, and the oral culture, “Poetas Repentistas”, recorded in 1980 just before the fall of the Salazar dictatorship.

Other significant screenings proposed during the parallel sessions that took place between the “Auditório Sórór Mariana” and the “Igreja de São Vicente” were: “Barokni Opera”, from circus creators sons of Milos Forman that recovered an opera of puppets of XVIIIth C. from Karel Loos, by Forman Brothers; “Vacas”, recreating a particular view of Spanish civil wars from the countryside in the Basc Country, between 1875 and 1936, by Julio Medem; “A Construção”, showing the construction of a dam which changed the culture of a village, by Gonçalo Mota; “O Tourneiro da Mouraria”, the last wood craftsman of Évora who made door knobs, by Takis & André Birken (Fig. 9); the presentation of the film “Abrolho’s” by Janaina Gonçalves Rios Barros, with Prof. Joao Brigola, who opened the session. Finally, a short film by Carla Magro Dias, “Vladimir”, featured a puppet made in Russia which came to the magic fingers of Manel Dias Trulé. This artist of the know-how culture brought “Vladimir” to the session to magically answer the questions of the public in the room.

Particularly outstanding was the presentation by Luis Guadaño, from Old Dominion University, entitled “Edwin Rousby, the pioneer of cinema in Portugal that stopped being one.” Guadaño explained the fascinating ways that this Hungarian entrepreneur brought his cinematography technique – with his orchestra and other spectacles associated with the origins of cinema – on a tour from Hungary, Portugal, and America. It took place at the XVI Century Library of the University of Évora, the old Former Room of the Civil Government (Fig. 10). The great atmosphere of the debate was complemented by the excellent wine sponsored

by the house of “Carmim” of Regengos de Monsaraz (Évora), which gave the perfect blend within a friendly conversation.

### Conclusion

Overall, the main event had a great success especially on the Saturday afternoon. This was the session hosted by the Sociedade Harmonia Eborensis, a club founded in 1849, situated in a XVI Century palace of the main square of Évora (Fig. 11). The variety of activities within the same space were the “urban receipt” for an interesting cocktail between an academic and a public cultural experience. These were for example: the exploration of an archaeological excavation in Virtual Reality by Ricardo Cabral and Martino Correia (Fig. 12); the digital art exhibition “Alchimia” by Pedro Alves Da Veiga with a live platform that morphed the image of the participants into the faces of different ethnic groups (Fig. 13); “Esperpentos”, a film by the Spanish director José Luis García Sánchez (Gona Producer), that narrates the story of the “esperpéntico” characters from Valle Inclán within the scenario of the flying circus, the theatre, and the cinema (Fig. 14). Finally, the touching presentation of the entrepreneur Ginés Haro, “Yassuní, Green Gold” that raised awareness of the tribes living in the Amazonian forest and its environmental problems (Fig. 15).

This cultural cocktail particularly represented the strength of the festival and meant that the public enjoyed the diversification of the day, with people from France, India, Hungary, Spain and Portugal exploring the stimulating performances within the different rooms of this emblematic building. Although the main objective of the festival was to capture the non-specialist public, such as the ones on the Saturday event, some of the activities were planned to reach a more specific audience, such as the sessions at

the “Convento dos Remedios”. This was the case of the opening session that was dedicated to new emerging filmmakers in the field of anthropological and archaeological documentaries such as Hugo Morango, Diogo Vilhena and Antonio Campos, Carlos Carpetudo and Gonçalo Lopes, and Rui Pedro Lamy, who kindly donated to the festival's image, the teaser of their new upcoming work “Imago”. The closing session was on a Sunday morning and it was dedicated to children (Fig. 16). This was an opportunity to show exceptional short animated films by Nuno Beato (Sardinha Em Lata), by Wesley Rodriguez (Armoriastudio) and by Ana Cardoso (Lusofona University); and lastly a series of instructional archaeological animated narration by Magoga Piñas Azpitarte (MAN, National Archaeological Museum of Spain). These were accompanied by first person interpretation of Takis Panatainies, archaeologist of the Camara Municipal of Évora and Nicola Schiavottello researcher at the CIDEHUS.

In conclusion, blending urban spaces with cultural screenings from around the world allowed us to show new facades of the city and new faces of the public, creating a different way to exchange cinema experiences. The festival has the potential to become an icon of Cultural Heritage communication and dissemination in the South of Portugal when more parties may come forward to support the festival.

### Heritales was funded by:

Cátedra UNESCO-UÉ & CIDEHUS-University of Évora (Fundos FEDER, Programa COMPETE e FCT, «CIDEHUS-UID/HIS/00057/2013» and «POCI-01-0145-FEDER-007702».FCT, FACC: Refª. 440.02 . Proc: 17/1/227. Also with the support of: Fórum FEA, DRCA; CME.



Fig. 1: Opening of the festival at the Palacio Vimioso



Fig. 2: Exterior of the Igreja de São Vicente.



Fig. 3: Historical photo of Sociedade Harmonia Eborensis



Fig. 4: Exterior of te Auditorio Soror Mariana (Cinema Fora dos Leões)



Fig. 5: Building of Convento dos Remedios



Fig. 6: Terraçe of Moi-te Bar



Fig. 7: Screening and debate of “Flamenco de Raiz” Vicente Pérez Herrero

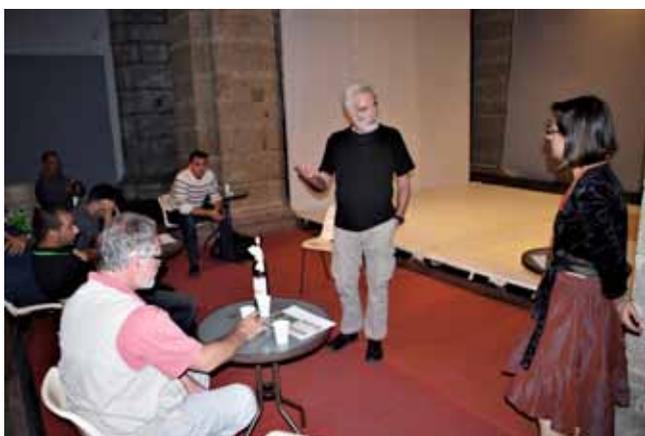


Fig. 8: Screening and debate of “O Pão e o Vinho” by Ricardo Costa at the Igreja de São Vicente



Fig. 9: Screening and debate of “O Torneiro da Mouraria” by Takis Panas & André Birken at the Auditório Soror Mariana.



Fig. 10: Luis Guadaño, “Edwin Rousby, the pioneer of cinema in Portugal that stopped being one”, within Library of the University of Évora, former room of the Civil Government



Fig. 11: Public sessions at the Sociedade Harmonia Eborensis on Saturday afternoon



Fig. 12: Exploring an archaeological excavation in Virtual Reality by Ricardo Cabral and Martino Correia.



Fig. 13: Exhibition by Pedro Alves Da Veiga.



Fig. 14: Screening of Esperpentos a film by the Spanish director José Luis García Sánchez



Fig. 15: Presentation of Yassuní, Green Gold by Ginés Haro, at the Sociedade Harmonia Hebreense.



Fig. 16: Kids session at the Convento dos Remedios.

## Made Corrections:

### A prison-based street art intervention for young offenders

**Oliver Walker**

Director, OllyStudio, London, olly@ollystudio.co.uk

**Susan Hansen**

Middlesex University, London, s.hansen@mdx.ac.uk

#### Abstract

This paper describes a prison-based street art intervention that took place at a Lithuanian institution for young offenders. During the first stage of the project, existing historical graffiti and murals on the prison walls were uncovered and documented. The second stage of the project involved working with the young offenders to co-produce a series of collaborative large-scale works within the prison walls, some of which incorporated elements of these earlier murals as a form of living heritage. The final stage of the project reproduced a selection of this work outside on the walls of the local city. Future work will involve a more formal evaluation of the impact of the intervention on the young offenders, the prison staff, and the local community.

#### 1. Introduction

The Made Corrections project had a dual focus on identifying and documenting existing historical prison-based graffiti and promoting young offenders' participation in contemporary street art, within the Kaunas Youth Correctional Facility, a Lithuanian prison for juvenile male offenders.<sup>1</sup> Lithuania was the first Soviet Republic to declare independence from the Soviet Union, in 1990. While Kaunas' current inmates were all born after this significant socio-political transition, the walls of the prison still bear visible traces of the lives of the young offenders who spent time in this correctional facility during the Soviet-era. The existing graffiti and murals within the prison were thus considered to have cultural significance as heritage and were identified and documented as part of this project. Figure 1, below, shows the faded remnants of an aspirational Soviet-era mural featuring pictograms from the 1980 Moscow Olympics. This was painted on the interior wall of the prison's recreation yard.

In contrast, Figure 2 shows an example of a mural produced after Lithuanian independence. Here we can see a change in the aspirational imagery offered to the inmates, from Soviet-endorsed sport and recreational activities, to newly available objects for consumption (here, Adidas, Snickers, Mars and Nike).

Juvenile offenders in Lithuania, like young offenders internationally, face particular challenges to their mental health and wellbeing, especially during periods of incarceration when they exhibit higher rates of depression, self harm, and suicide attempts than their non-incarcerated peers (Bradley, 2009). Diržytė et al's (2006) study of the mental health of juvenile offenders in Lithuania found that, compared to non-offending secondary school students, young offenders held more negative beliefs about themselves, their relationships with others, and the world at large. Male offenders' wellbeing was particularly influenced by their assessment of their personal skills, abilities and achievements, whereas female offenders appeared to be more influenced by the subjective evaluations of others.

In working with young male offenders it may then be particularly important to engage in interventions that have some practical basis, with an aim of enhancing their skill set,

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1. Acknowledgements. The project involved invaluable contributions from David Ellis, Naringa Gudenaite, Marcus Tokavevas, Edita Simonavičiute, Donatas Stankevičius, Ernest Zacharevic, Inside Out Project, Tadas Simcus, Zygimantas Amelynas, Gediminas Banaitis, Rita Valiukonyte, Richard Carroll, Dean Stalham, Vaiva Katinaityte, Gabija Grusaite, Noemi Renevey, David Shaw and Gintaras Leoncikas.



Fig. 1. Soviet-era mural featuring sporting pictograms



Fig. 2. Post Soviet-era mural showing newly available brands

abilities and achievements, and consequently their sense of self-worth and confidence. Accordingly, this project sought to collaboratively engage young offenders in the process of design, layout and production of works of street art, such that they might acquire a sense of competence with this new creative skill set.

### 1.1 Street art, graffiti, creativity, and criminality

An association is commonly made between graffiti and criminality:

Graffiti writers [are claimed to] engage in a broad range of crimes (such as theft, interpersonal violence, and drug possession and dealing) (Young, 2013: 100).

However it was not until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that graffiti was first considered as a symptom of social deviance. “Secret hieroglyphs” or coded visual messages only intelligible to insiders were then described as “a form of social protection used by outcast classes as a weapon against society” (Ellis, 1901: 210). The graffiti of prisoners was seen both as a degenerate compulsion, and more positively as the product of a universal creative human instinct: that when isolated from society, one will experience “the need of embodying some artistic expression” that is “scarcely distinguishable from the instinct which leads to the production of heroic works of art” (Ellis, 1901: 211). These contrasting historical discourses continue to inform the ways that we understand the creative expressions of prisoners – in that offenders’ unsanctioned graffiti tends still to be perceived as vandalism that is symptomatic of criminality and disorder (Hansen, 2016). Conversely, the art of prisoners is now an established art brut – or outsider art – sub-genre, and art therapy programs are widely regarded as therapeutic in releasing the latent universal creative drive of offenders.

Art-based activities and creative practice have been long argued to be therapeutic for at risk youth and young offenders. Prescott et al (2008: 156) assert that creativity is a “critical component of resiliency in the lives of [at risk] youth.” They suggest that there are clear links between young people’s participation in creative activities and their life achievement and ‘healthy’ lifestyle choices. However, most art therapy programs are based on a traditional approach to creativity, and encourage individual expression through drawing and

painting with traditional media, under the close direction of an art therapist.

The majority of existing art-based interventions tend to be designed to operate at an individual or small group level, and do not often encompass the opportunities for creativity in the wider prison environment, nor do they take account of the impact of the often bleak and threatening environment on the well-being of prisoners, and the potential for inmates’ creativity to collectively augment this detrimental environment. While mural programs are sometimes employed in an attempt to ‘brighten up’ prison environments, these tend to be imposed on the prisoners, with scant opportunity for consultation, collaboration, or involvement in the creative process of their design and production.

Outwith the prison environment, there is a parallel tradition of community-based mural programs for at risk youth and young offenders (Venable, 2005). Murals have often been used in attempts to connect with at risk youth in deprived environments. Judith Baca’s Great Wall of Los Angeles is an early monumental instance of such an endeavor. This ambitious program successfully engaged a large group of minority ethnic and underprivileged youth over the seven-year period of the mural’s production from 1976 to 1983 (SPARC, 2017). Notably, this period coincides with the emergence of graffiti as an apparent social problem in North America.

Several years later, in 1986, Jane Golden founded the City of Philadelphia’s Mural Arts Program (Golden, Rice & Kinney, 2002). This was originally conceived as part of the city’s Anti-Graffiti Network, which sought to engage young people who had been prosecuted as graffiti vandals to work in collaboration with professional artists to produce murals in the city. Although the program is no longer focused exclusively on engaging young offenders, it retains a focus on youth through its engagement with local high schools in mural making, and employs over 300 artists per year, including more than 100 young people who had been prosecuted as graffiti vandals.

Mural programs are an effective way to engage at risk youth and young offenders, especially when they involve a level of collaboration. However, these murals are most often articulated on community walls, rather than in the correctional institutions occupied by young offenders. Street



Fig. 3. Internal door of isolation unit



Fig. 4. Earlier inspirational murals in an isolation unit

art increasingly intersects with contemporary muralism in the form of large-scale permissioned public murals. However, street art has a co-lineage with unauthorized forms of public image making and youth subcultures, such as graffiti – and may, as such, have a particular appeal to young people. Despite street art's collaborative democratic ethic and capacity to produce site-specific commentary in environments otherwise regarded as deprived or threatening, this contemporary urban art form has yet to be utilized within correctional facilities for young offenders.

## 2. A prison-based street art project for young offenders

The Made Corrections project sought to a) identify and document existing historical prison-based graffiti; and b) engage young offenders in the co-production of a series of collaborative large-scale street artworks within the Kaunas Youth Correctional Facility, a Lithuanian correctional facility for juvenile male offenders. Some of these works were also reproduced outside the prison, on the walls of the local city. The latter aim is the focus of the current paper.

Prior to this intervention, the only opportunity for the young men to make marks on the walls was in the isolation units, or 'holding pens', that they pass through when being admitted to the larger correctional facility. Figure 3, below shows existing tags and messages gouged into the door of an isolation unit. Prison officials reported that the young offenders experienced the atmosphere of the isolation units as threatening and intimidating and specifically requested that the isolation units be included in the areas of the prison addressed by the project. In the interior environment of the prison, some of the isolation units displayed fading 'enforced'

inspirational murals, reflecting earlier attempts by the prison officials to brighten the atmosphere of these environments. Figure 4 (above) shows a figurative mural that also features an inspirational message/poem. Translated, this reads:

*That! On the top of trees the hope would land  
That winds would blow all the good from the home  
That rain would wash away the pain and the guilt  
That the snow wouldn't fall on the souls and the hearts.  
That everything would begin from the new  
That everything is good and everything is beautiful  
(trans. Laima Nomeikaite)*

The young offenders assisted in the repainting of the isolation units with murals designed by the artists Tadas Symcas and Zygimantas Amelynas. The young men who volunteered to work with the artists in this area were pre-trial, and had first hand experience of this (formerly) threatening and intimidating environment.

The other sites within the prison encompassed by the project included the outdoor recreation areas (seen earlier in Figures 1 and 2) that bore the remnants of dilapidated murals from both the pre- and post-Soviet era. The first of the recreation areas was co-produced as part of an Inside Out Project Group Action. Photographs were taken (by local photographer Donatas Stankevicius) of the 39 young offenders who agreed to participate in this project. The young men then chose the photograph that they wished to represent them.

The initial plan for Recreation Area 1 is presented in Figure 5, below.



Fig. 5. The isolation unit during and post intervention

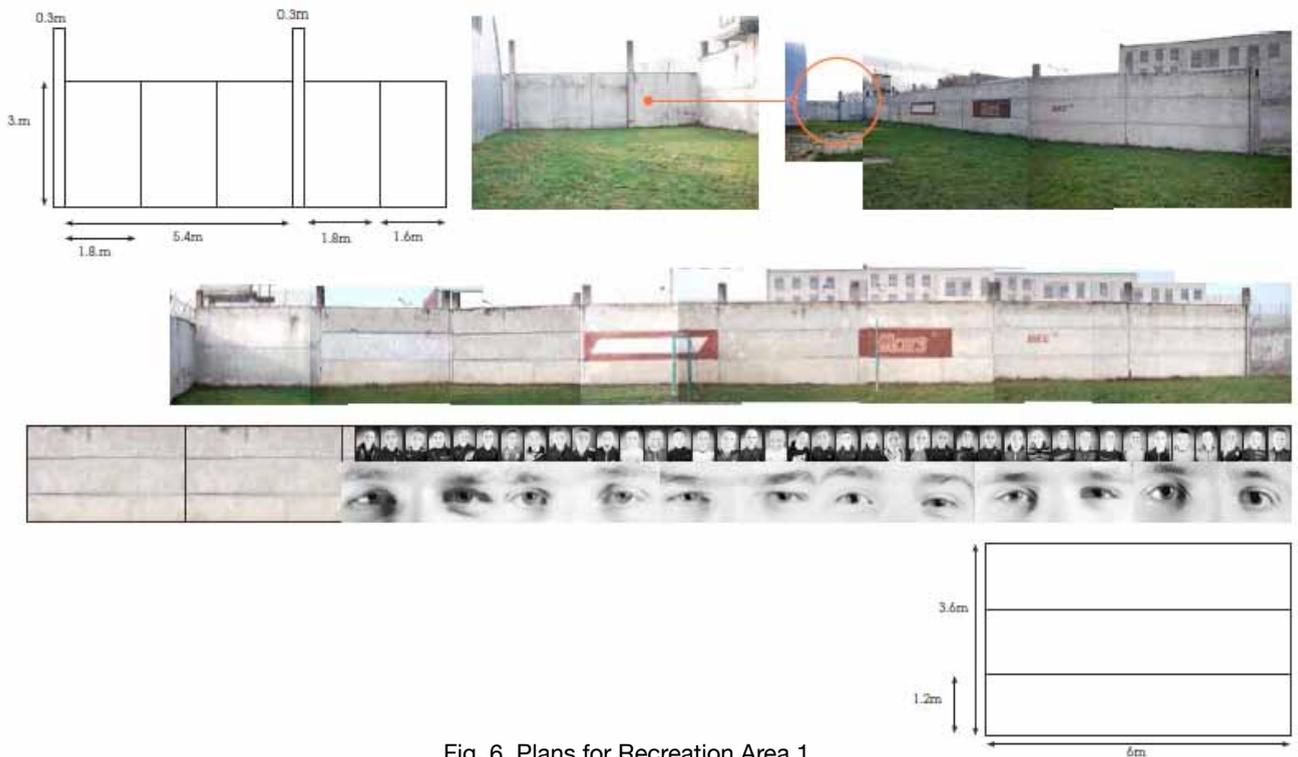


Fig. 6. Plans for Recreation Area 1

The systematic layout of the photographs on the walls of the recreation area was designed in advance by the project team. However, when it came to installing the work, the young offenders intervened and took control of the arrangement of their photographs on the wall.

The order of the groupings in which the photographs appear reflects the young men's own acknowledgement of both friendships and hierarchical social networks within the correctional facility (see Figure 7, below).



Fig. 7. Co-producing the wall in Recreation Area 1



Fig. 8. Young offenders learning stenciling techniques with Zacharevic

The second recreational area was co-produced with the artist Ernest Zacharevic. The young offenders engaged with the production of this work assisted the artist and learned stenciling techniques in the process.

This intervention involved working with the existing Soviet-era murals on the walls. Zacharevic incorporated these earlier sporting pictograms into his design, thus acknowledging and retaining a sense of the heritage of the correctional facility and the lived experience of its prior occupants. The reworked mural featured young men and boys with wire cutters engaged in an apparent attempt to escape from the prison – emphasizing the contrast between the youth of the inmates and the reality of their isolation and incarceration.

The final stage of the project within the prison allowed the young offenders free wall space and creative license to produce their own autonomous stenciled and free hand works. Outside the prison, in the city center of Kaunas, the photographs from the recreation area wall were reproduced on the former Police Headquarters, mirroring the prison walls on the outside. Although some residents objected to the placement of the young men's photographs in public space – a few people even attempted to pull down the paste-ups immediately after they were posted – many others were positive about the humanizing impact of the project.



Fig. 9. The reworked mural in Recreation Area 2



Fig. 10. The Recreation Area 1 wall mirrored on Kaunas Former Police Headquarters

### 3. Conclusion

The Made Corrections project was successful in engaging young offenders in the process of design, layout and production of works of street art – giving them a sense of mastery with a new creative skill set. The project also documented and incorporated existing murals, as a form of living heritage, within the prison walls. Informal feedback from both the young offenders and from the prison authorities was uniformly positive, and the project received an award from the Head of Lithuanian Prisons.

In future work, we seek to develop a version of the Made Corrections project that incorporates a more rigorous evaluation process, so that we may formally assess the impact of this project on the mental health and wellbeing of young offenders and staff within the prison, and on community attitudes towards young offenders.

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## The myth of the “street artist”: a brief note on terminology

**Peter Bengtsen**

Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences, Division of Art History and Visual Studies, Lund University

Hämtställe 30, 22100 Lund, Sweden

peter.bengtsen@kultur.lu.se

<https://lu.academia.edu/PeterBengtsen>

Among researchers within the field of street art studies, a discussion crops up repeatedly, both in publications and in conversations at conferences. It is usually set off by someone asking one or more interrelated questions, including the following: How do we define street art? Is it still street art if it is shown in a gallery or museum? And what, precisely, makes someone a street artist?

The latest time I took part in such a discussion was during a session at the 2017 Street Art & Urban Creativity conference in Lisbon. Afterwards it struck me that while I have had numerous conversations about these issues over the years, both with other researchers and members of the wider public, some of my thoughts have never been put in writing. With this brief text, then, I want to sum up those thoughts. My hope is that this will be helpful – perhaps especially to those who are new to this growing field of research and who may, understandably, find the overlapping and inconsistent terminology confusing.

Defining street art is by no means an easy task. Inspired by the American sociologist Howard S. Becker (1982) and his concept art world, in previous publications I have proposed that the meaning of the term “street art” is evolving continuously and is dependent on its use by artists, critics, academics, fans, curators and everyone else who in some way engages with what they call street art. A consequence of this understanding of the term as socially constructed is that its meaning will never be settled once and for all (Bengtsen 2014). In this respect, the term “street art” is much like the term “art”.

Taking the position that we will never reach a universal consensus about the meaning of the term does not imply that researchers should disregard the importance of terminology. Quite the opposite; since the term “street art” has multiple meanings, it becomes all the more important to clarify what it means when each of us use it in our work. For my own part, I generally take street art to mean expressions in urban public space (including privately owned, but publicly accessible, space) that are of an unsanctioned, open and ephemeral nature (Bengtsen 2014). This is just the working definition I tend to apply in my research. I understand and accept that there exist other ideas about what street art is, just as there exist other terms that other researchers use to describe the phenomena I call street art.

In discussions about definitions and delimitations, the specific question about whether or not artworks presented in galleries and museums can be labeled as street art often arises. I have at times heard the response (both implicitly and explicitly) that artworks in these contexts are indeed to be categorized as street art since they are created by street artists. On the surface this may seem like a compelling argument. It does, however, immediately raise another query: what makes someone a street artist?

Most artists engage in multimodal and multifaceted practices. This means that any attempt to fit a certain artist – and by extension all of their work – into a single, neatly labeled box is problematic. When writing about street art, I have found it more helpful to focus on individual expressions and, importantly, their specific context and the network of expressions they are part of, rather than the people who

created them. In fact, over the years I have come to believe that the designation “street artist” for the most part is misguided.

My reasoning, by way of analogy, is as follows: Pablo Picasso worked in a range of different media, including ceramics, but is arguably best known as a painter. The fact that he is foremost known as a painter, however, does not mean that his ceramic works are categorized as paintings. Following this line of thought, the fact that an artist creates work in the street does not mean that this encapsulates their entire artistic practice. It therefore seems reductive and misrepresentative of the artist’s practice to call them a “street artist”. Likewise, their studio output – whether it is displayed in galleries and museums, or is sold directly to collectors – cannot, as a rule, convincingly be labeled “street art”.

This is the case even if the studio artworks replicate motifs from street works or incorporate materials or techniques commonly associated with street art. Some, myself included, have taken to calling such studio work by people who also create work in the street (and have a presence within the street art world) “urban art”. I would emphasize, though, that the term “urban art” is also frequently used synonymously with “street art”. Things become especially muddy in, for example, a French- or Spanish-speaking context where the term “street art” often is translated, respectively, to “art urbain” and “arte urbano”. As with “street art”, I do not expect that we will ever arrive at a consensus about the meaning of the term “urban art”, and I believe our energy as researchers is better spent on things other than attempting to homogenize our terminology.

When discussing street art, an advantage of focusing on the individual expression and its context, rather than the creator of the expression, is that this allows us to sidestep the issue of intentionality. Instead of deliberating on whether an expression was intended to be seen as an artwork, it is left to the individual viewer in a specific social, spatial and temporal context to decide whether or not something is street art. Thus, even expressions that were not initially created as artworks may come to be seen as art in the meeting with a viewer. Since we cannot create a generally applicable summary of all the variable traits and conditions that may cause someone to experience something as street art, the best we can do as researchers is to focus on the specific

expression at hand – as well as its context and, perhaps, other viewers’ experience of both – in order to convey as clearly as possible to the audience what is interesting about it.

Over the last decade or so, street art studies has really started to come into its own as an academic field (for more on this, see Bengtsen 2016). As the body of scholars focused on street art and other forms of urban creativity has grown, so has the number of ways in which terms like “street art”, “street artist” and “urban art” are being used. Understandably, this can be confusing to newcomers and more established researchers alike. I believe, however, that the confusion mainly stems from the tacit presumption that we should all use the terms in the same way. What I am suggesting is that we lift this burden of expectation from our collective shoulders. As long as we use a given term consistently within the framework of a specific publication, and as long as we make clear to the audience what we take the term to mean in that publication, we can safely abandon the notion of a need for consensus and focus instead on producing interesting scholarship.

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## Cultural heritage and the ficto-critical method: The ballad of Utah and Ether

**Lachlan MacDowall**

Lecturer, Screen and Cultural Studies,  
University of Melbourne  
lmacd@unimelb.edu.au

### Abstract

Once dubbed “the Bonnie and Clyde of graffiti”, the globe-trotting, train-painting duo of Utah and Ether occupy a central place in contemporary graffiti folklore. Having both served jail time in the US for graffiti offenses, the couple skipped parole and embarked on a long term “probation vacation”, painting subway networks across Europe and Asia. Their exploits were carefully documented through photographs and web videos, including a collaboration with *The Grifters*, a ground-breaking video series. In 2016, Ether was again arrested and jailed while placing stickers on a Melbourne street. This paper considers the implications of Utah and Ether’s graffiti practice. Using ficto-critical writing techniques, it attempts to fill in the gaps of Utah and Ether’s fantasy life on the run and think through its implications for cultural heritage and graffiti research in a late capitalist world.

### Keywords:

Graffiti, Ficto-criticism, Law, Literature, Research methods, Utah, Ether, “Probation Vacation”

### 1. Introduction

Ficto-criticism emerges as a genre of writing in the 1990s, driven by a range of cultural forces such as strands of feminism and the advent of the Public Internet (Gibbs, 2005).<sup>1</sup> In ficto-criticism, the eradication of clear boundaries between public and private selves under the conditions of highly-mediatised late capitalist societies is reflected in a breakdown in strict generic demarcations between forms of fiction, essays and criticism and between stories, reflections and arguments. Ficto-criticism is also the product of a space created for more marginal voices in publishing enabled by shifts in the economic models of electronic publishing and the institutional consolidation of creative writing programs in a global University system, particularly in the Anglophone world.

This paper argues that ficto-critical approaches have a role to play in cultural heritage, particularly in responding to

1 - See also Schukne and Brewster, 2005, p. 393-395; Worth, 2014, p. 8.

graffiti and street art. In the case of graffiti, the combination of illegality, the ephemerality of the physical product and the seeming-longevity of its digital products (its “Second Lives”, to quote Utah and Ether’s collaborator Good Guy Boris) mean that traditional heritage approaches may struggle to capture its true value. After all, in an era of highly-mediatised graffiti, there is no shortage of images, but often a dearth of contexts, narratives and emotions

Utah and Ether are a female/male duo of American train painters, who skipped parole following arrests in the US and commenced a spree of international graffiti (Knight, 2016). They have painted graffiti in dozens of countries including through Asia and have become key figures in the global graffiti movement, documenting their own activities with videos, books and ‘zines (see [utahether.com](http://utahether.com)).

Despite their prominence and importance to graffiti, Utah and Ether were excluded from my forthcoming study of the major graffiti and street art Instagram accounts as the data-driven algorithmic methods did not register their popularity

and influence. Their Instagram account also suffered suspensions and cancellation, likely as a result of the illegal nature of their activities. The omission and methodological failure in my Instagram study has driven this methodological innovation.

As Anna Gibbs (2005) notes: “Fictocriticism is a way of writing for which there is no blueprint and which must be constantly invented anew in the face of the singular problems that arise in the course of engagement with what is researched” (Gibbs, 2005: n.p.). Ficto-criticism as it is practiced here is not a form of self-expression but rather a careful transcription of the multiple texts produced by graffiti writers and an inventory of the contexts in which graffiti might appear, including the forms of affect it might generate. Through its careful staging of narrative, ficto-critical approaches are also designed to register the many connections – both institutional or coincidental – that shape graffiti’s production and its consumption, the spatial, temporal and cultural networks in which it appears. Through its capacity to simulate an inner voice or to mark emotions of pleasure, fear, desire, boredom or disgust, ficto-criticism can get closer to dimensions of graffiti that are absent from its visual simulacra.

Ficto-criticism is also appropriate for a terrain involving secrecy, lies, rumour, machismo and dissembling. When the subjects are engaged in ongoing criminal activities, risking jail or other punishments and are subject of surveillance, any documentation can threaten their freedom or, as was the case with the *New York Times* reporting of Utah and Ether, draw unwanted and unhelpful attention to the actors. However, in a ficto-critical approach, where a single authorial voice is absent, facts are not identified and truths are mingled with lies and speculation, the risk of jeopardy to the protagonists is minimised.

Finally, ficto-criticism is a helpful approach when there already exist a wide range of public documents that can be drawn on, including the extensive documentation produced by the artists themselves.

This ficto-critical approach has many antecedents. A key one, necessary in thinking through the gender dynamics of their relationship is the writing of Chris Kraus, particularly *Summer of Hate* (2012), which includes an extended

section on the US prison system. A broader tradition of popular terrorist literature has also contributed to this piece: Bret Easton Ellis’ *Glamorama* (1998), for its registering of international mobility and self-conscious mediatisation and Jarett Kobek’s *ATTA* (2011), a fictional first-person account of the 9/11 hijacker, published by Semiotexte press, of which Kraus is a co-editor.

Key sources for this work include Michael Moorcock’s Jerry Cornelius quartet and, as mentioned in the piece, fellow Sci-Fi New Waver Harry Harrison’s *Stainless Steel Rat* series, as well as two novels on the Kennedy assassination: Don DeLillo’s *Libra* (1988) and its key progeny James Elroy’s *American Tabloid* (1995) which develops a hallucinogenic account of place and conspiracy. The opening sentence of *Libra* also pay tribute to the teenage fascination with the subways of New York, that gave birth to the sub-culture of train painting that Utah and Ether have taken to new heights. As a teenager, we are told of DeLillo’s Lee Harvey Oswald: “This was the year he rode the subway to the ends of the city, two hundred miles of track.”

My first use of ficto-critical method was in a commissioned essay about a graffiti-themed mural in inner Melbourne, which was published as “The Grandmaster Protocol”. What follows is an extract of a longer ficto-critical account of the adventures of Utah and Ether.

## 2. The ballad of Utah and Ether

This is a work of fiction. Most of the events in this story did take place, but not in the way I describe. I wasn’t there.

....

Jim Clay Harper slumped in a seat at Departure Gate 55 of Singapore Airport. The gate was empty. No planes would leave here for the next few hours. Four oil workers in dirty overalls and high-vis vests were sleeping on the rows of seats near the windows. The carpet smelt new, the high ceiling of delicate white steel glowed, repeating endlessly in huge glass panels.

Across the cavernous passage of the empty terminal, an eight-year old boy playing on the furniture slipped a cracked his head on the oversize bolts of a steel pillar. There was a little bit of blood, then a lot of blood. His parents started

screaming. Jim watched as the parents yelled as they tried to staunch the flow. The boy turned white. Two airport staff shuffled nervously, but no one came to help.

Danielle Bremner waited at Gate 58. She was flying out to Australia with Jim but they never sat together at airports. Ten hours earlier she and Harper had crept through a bamboo grove, scaled a concrete wall, hid in the shadows cast by the sodium lights of the train yard, cut through a fence and finally, spray-painted a Singapore commuter train. Then they went to a nightclub. Then in the morning, to the airport. Her shoes were still damp.

Sitting separately at different departure gates seemed silly but it could be the difference between freedom and prison. Jim had first learned this way of thinking from a novel he read as teenager in Boston. Invented in the 50s, novelised in the 1970s and set in the twenty-first century, Harry Harrison's book *The Stainless Steel Rat* was the story of an outlaw, who hacked, scammed, sneaked his way across the galaxy.

Like Harper, the Rat's real name was also Jim, Slippery Jim Di'Griz. And the Rat's wife Angelina provided the template for his future relationship with Bremner, a sexy, post-psycho-pathic co-conspirator. Growing up in Melbourne, *The Stainless Steel Rat* was also Julian Assange's favourite book. In the early 1990s, Assange used Harry Harrison as his pseudonym on his *OK Cupid* date profile.

Jim never liked to read but Harrison's anti-hero had exercised a fascination over him as a fourteen year old. Was it possible the powers-that-be were that impotent, that the army of sensors, robots, police and policies was so easy to evade? It turned out that it was true.

It was a little over a month before he would be arrested and go to trial.

....

On the last day of May 2016 in Room 5 of the Melbourne Magistrates Court I met one of the most notorious graffiti writers in the world, the American Jim Clay Harper, aka "Ether". Short, slender and white-faced with close-cropped dark hair and wearing an oversized dark green prison tracksuit, Harper sat silent and distracted for the 30-minute

contest hearing, though he was facing a likely six-month jail term in Australia, before being immediately deported to the US to face a second sentence for violating parole in Riker's Island, New York.

On his arrest, in a headlock on Brunswick St, Fitzroy, Harper was found in possession of a Canon camera, a blue box-cutter and numerous paint cans and markers. His grey jacket and camouflage hat also contained paint residue. The Prosecutor reports that transit police intelligence confirmed that Ether was an international graffiti vandal and that within graffiti culture, tags could be viewed as unique and personal identifying markers.

"Are there any prior matters?" asked the Magistrate. "I assume because he has just arrived in Australia there's no prior matters?"

"No, your honour," said the Prosecutor, "but I do have some American priors," she said, searching through her papers.

"American priors?" said the Magistrate. "I'm not sure what I can do with those...."

Through whispers in the courtroom I realise that Harper is calm and disinterested because he knows things that the police and Magistrate do not. Danielle Bremner, "Utah", was still on the run.

The night before Harper's trial, she had purchased an airline ticket from Brisbane and checked in online for the evening flight to Melbourne. Police waited at the airport but Bremner did not appear. Like a Stainless Steel Rat, she had simultaneously purchased tickets with cash for a flight to Hong-Kong, clearing customs while her Melbourne flight was still in the air.

....

At the Singapore departure gate, the child was still bleeding. Jim watched this parable of modern times play out in front of him: a badly injured tourist in an empty, multi-million dollar airport terminal with two young staff on walkie-talkies, unable to summon a doctor. The building is buzzing with technology, humming with money, at the centre of the city but as remote as village life. The mother is screaming at the

airline staff but nothing happens. The life is draining out of the boy and no one comes.

This is the logic that Jim and Danielle confront in each city they visit – vast new, expensive empty infrastructure with screens and cameras but no people in sight – whatever terrible event of crime takes place, there is only silence, waiting. The glistening face of the control society is a mirage. In India, famously, they paint at a virgin train lay-up so new that modernity and graffiti is yet to arrive. The sparkling new trains have never been used. They are wrapped in heavy plastic. With their trusty boxcutters, Utah and Ether cut them open like Christmas presents.

....

The bleeding child in the empty airport and the crime or emergency where no one comes is part of a larger understanding. Like the Wikileaks founder, they are led by a science-fiction hero born in 1957, the Stainless Steel Rat, like the 9/11 hijackers with everyday stationary knives for cutting cardboard becoming a makeshift weapon, like Edward Snowden, they choose to evade authorities in Hong Kong, an international city that is also part of an old empire and a New Century, out of reach of American warrants and extraditions.

This isn't just about graffiti or about Asia. Utah and Ether are following the logic of a New Age, a new Triad, a twenty-first century Alphabet: A is for Assange. B is for Box-cutters. C is for China.

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## Lisbon Street Art and Urban Creativity International Conference 2017

### Miguel Honrado

The Secretary of State for Culture of Portugal

In the context of Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Conference 2017, I would like to congratulate the organization of the 4th Edition of this event; the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon for hosting once again this initiative; the other partners of this meeting. It is with great pleasure that the Ministry of Culture, through the Directorate-General for the Arts, supports this Conference.

Considering the intense programme announced for these three days of work, it is easy to confirm the relevance that this subject, connected with graffiti and street art, has come to gain as an object of study, for a very diverse academic environment, including several scientific areas, which I would classify as a multinational one, taking into account the origins of the participating researchers.

The subject is approached from many analytical perspectives and multiple plastic realities, which confirm the current richness of the urban art phenomenon, both in terms of its aesthetic, patrimonial, social, economic and political impact and of the fast pace characteristic of its evolution.

Mutations due to an effort of overcoming have always been crucial in the development of the visual arts. In the contemporaneity, Art History identifies multiple currents, movements, genres, techniques, materials, creating a ground for a profound aesthetic renewal that results from a certain sense of questioning of the inherent conditions of creativity.

There is an expansion of the self-awareness of discourses and the emergence of metalanguages; the questioning of the authorship as a set of individualistic and virtuous gestures; the rupture with the process of consigning the work of art through the institutional dimension, among other rupture positions that projects such as those by Marcel Duchamp or Joseph Beuys epitomize.

The latter author, by considering that each man is potentially an artist, by determining that the artistic is intrinsic to the nature of each individual, widens the spectrum of creativity, bringing it to the domain of citizenship, to the field of art, that asserts itself as an intervention of political nature.

In some ways, it may be in this context that the genesis of expressions associated with urban art is inscribed. Born in the late 1960s, early 1970s, in the cities of Philadelphia and New York, graffiti emerged as a self-taught and youthful medium, claiming for itself a status of subversive act, practiced on the street, illegally, and thus in anonymity, with the aim of territorial demarcation.

Initially distant from the conventionality of institutional places, these forms of expression claimed a presence in the public space, demanding for themselves the right of expression of those who, while not coming from the high culture world, wanted to give visibility to their work that would materialize, at the beginning, in something as simple as a name, a signature, a tag.

Yet today we are distant from this primordial reality, because transformations in the universe of graffiti swiftly came to light. New iconographies were outlined, new media were adopted, new techniques were aligned, generations of authors were positioned and the phenomenon became global.

More expanded fields, such as street art and even more broadly urban art, began to be defined. The trend generated by these manifestations became an urban subculture and almost inevitably emerged a progressive institutionalization of these plasticisms, marked by their presence in galleries and museological spaces, and even being exhibited in some of the most prestigious institutions worldwide.

The proliferation of research, publications and events dedicated to these artistic practices has reinforced the interest of city governments, sometimes through the openness to support urban art, as a strategy that could contribute to heritage safeguard, the improvement of the public space and the democratization of access to culture.

And here I could not fail to mention all the work developed by Lisbon City Council, congratulating Mrs. Catarina Vaz Pinto, City Councillor for Culture, for the project of the Urban Art Gallery. I believe that even at international level this is an emblematic case of a consistent and multifaceted investment on these expressions, with a relevant impact on the City of Lisbon.

The support offered by the Ministry of Culture to the International Conference of Street Art and Urban Creativity through the Directorate-General for the Arts, as mentioned above, reflects the strength, the range, the diversity and the notoriety that these expressions and their community have conquered in the present time.

We are effectively committed to the most recent visual manifestations, to a particular attention to the transformations of the cultural environment, to a desire for updating and comprehensiveness. This is an artistic field that we cannot fail to observe, seeking to reach its authors and the entities that have promoted a productive performance.

As a part of the visual arts landscape in the present, this should mean supporting more initiatives in the universe of urban art. For that, it would be important to have more applications to the support programmes for artistic activities promoted by the Directorate-General for the Arts, as part of a new model that will be launched in the second half of this year.

We believe that we can contribute to dignify and strengthen the careers within an artistic context as young and emergent as that of street art; to the reinforcement of the vitality and heterogeneity that characterize their languages today; to the reflection and debate they involve; to the role they currently play in the aesthetic experience of urban landscapes and also to the democratization of production and access to culture that urban art can clearly achieve.

Miguel Honrado  
The Secretary of State for Culture of Portugal



## Street Art and Urban Creativity

### Welcome Session

6-07-2017

#### Paula Varanda

Diretora-Geral das Artes

Dear Vice President of the Faculty of Fine Arts, PhD Program Director, organizer and promoter of this conference, attendees, other institutional representatives, students and professionals here today;

As director of the national organization that has a mission to promote the value and support the arts in Portugal I am honored to share this moment in this event that will undertake discussion about some of the paradigmatic approaches to arts and society in our present times.

Direção-Geral das Artes (General Directorate of Arts) is a public organization from the Portuguese Ministry of Culture, that coordinates the policies of art funding for the fields of architecture, digital arts, visual arts, dance, design, photography, music and theater. We cover a diverse range of disciplines and professional activities. Among our main attributes are the management of various funding programmes to support the arts, the promotion of art and artists resident in Portugal, both across the country and abroad at an international level, the fostering of international cultural exchange and institutional cooperation, and ensuring regular and widespread access to culture as well as new audiences outreach.

We are an institution that monitors, regularly, to good extent, and for quite a few years, the arts scene. We receive a lot of

applications for projects every year, and many requests to inform the audience about such projects almost daily, and we find the area of practice and enquiry herewith at stake fairly unexplored.

Indeed, within the projects that we fund (circa 500 a year), those that are particularly devoted to street art endeavours are fairly unusual. Street art practices appear embedded in proposals of a wider scope, dedicated to cross art-forms, often mixing ephemeral performance with mixed media, “soundscapes” and visual imprinting in public space. But the applications to develop proposals that are clearly under the headline that names this international conference – urban creativity – and particularly those that affiliate with designations and groups such as street art, graffiti and street performance, or urban dance, are rare and appear to be out of context of the mainframe of the funding system that DAGARTES is responsible for managing.

We sense however, that the more artists and cultural agents are concerned with the social dimension of their work and the more they are engaged with social cohesion within the scope of urban communities, the more we find that collectives and individual practitioners are working towards opening their work to the unframed space of the city, as an alternative to galleries, theatres, and concert halls. Conventional spaces support the codes of production and reception which in

turn help to consolidate, but also to perpetuate, aesthetic fashion and creative processes that are less permeable to the effects of public intervention, so if we do not move our attention to artistic practices developing elsewhere, we may not be able to capture the change that might be undertaken in urban creative communities. And while in the funding system these practices may not have visibility, we are aware of a community of people who have been developing artistic skills, eventually to highly professionalized standards (despite their real income from this activity and institutional recognition), who are well settled and key players in the terrain.

We do sense a tension between different approaches to art and society reliant in these alternative models of working, which have a political stance, and still require that we look at them and renew perspectives which have long ago been identified - as the low art and high art distinctions for example, the popular and the elite - in the middle of other debates about social and territorial cohesion that have to some extent helped to finance and politically promote the value of street art.

A significant sign of the pertinence of this subject is that we are gathering within an international conference, in the realms of the university, with the support of the major national arts funding body for independent professionals. It is extremely stimulating that we can witness such an encounter, because in fact it reveals the consolidation of another paradigm in terms of the role and the appreciation of art, for people, for society, and for the professionals themselves.

Inherent to this gathering, so we find, is an important acknowledgement that creative propositions, emerging from organizations and often individuals or informal groups within civil society, have an innovative approach to urban space development and social experience. A space and society shaped by the hectic and sometimes chaotic design or unpredictable pulse of cityscapes, where highly fixed routines and behavioural codes overlap with variable sorts of exceptional events, economic conditions and cultural backgrounds. The street is the public space, both ruled and un-ruled, which creative endeavour is addressing to transform and to integrate in the form of both liberated and committed artistic practice.

As we can read from the topics of the conference programme, this is a theme that gathers aesthetic, social, political and economical issues that are at the forefront of various agendas, amongst which artists play a distinctive and innovative role that is here to be highlighted and debated. For our own institution this is a rich field of convergence to be closely followed and that hopefully gains the attention of more of the organizations and individuals that are working with public funding for making art a public experience.

I am particularly grateful to Pedro Soares Neves for taking the initiative to gather such a rich programme of speakers, projects and debates and challenging us to be here together under this umbrella today.

Paula Varanda

## Street Art & Urban Creativity, 17.07.07

Catarina Vaz Pinto, Council women for Culture, Lisbon City Council



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.





The SAUC 2017 conference bridged scholarly and practice-based approaches to urban creativity. This year we included a range of diversified activities that included practical interventions, roundtable discussions, exhibitions, a book launch, and guided visits to sites of urban creativity around the city of Lisbon.

The impact of the practice-oriented activities was particularly positive, and generated a strong connection between theory and practice – effects that also had an impact on the conference and the development of the two issues of this 3rd Volume of SAUC Scientific Journal.

The rhythm of the debates during the conference was inspiring and constructive. The intangible dimensions of the conservation of graffiti and street art were regarded by most to have a broader capacity for dealing with graffiti and street art as heritage, albeit mainly through documentation. Practice-based approaches from the professional fields of public art and urbanism augmented the academic debate.

Texts from both scholarly and professional/practice-based approaches may be found in this publication. This volume of the SAUC Scientific Journal takes these debates conversations forward in presenting a series of papers tightly focused on the issues of intangible heritage and knowledge transfer, and the range of strategic responses to these challenges that could be adopted. We hope that this volume is both a timely resource and a reminder of the positive and productive debates and conversations held at the SAUC 2017 conference.

© Authors and Editors, Lisbon, November 2016 - ISSN 2183-3869



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