



**Street Art &
Urban Creativity
Scientific Journal**

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

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Editors

Pedro Soares Neves
Daniela V. de Freitas Simões

Research concerning street art and urban creativity assumes quite different methodologies according to the scientific background of the researchers and the scientific area being developed. As there is still no consensus regarding methodological approaches towards such issues, and in the aftermath of the first international conference on street art and urban creativity, this issue brings forward the insight of several researchers on their own methodological approaches towards this thematic.

The contents were partially presented at the Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Seminar (2015). After the opening remarks and welcome by the Fine Art Faculty representative, a very pertinent image questioning was launched by Heitor Alvelos' keynote, followed by the first panel that addressed both EU projects, publishing experience, and gender issues within urban creativity.

The second panel was characterized by the narratives of *flanêurie* and photo-documentation, both as methodologies of approaching urban creativity. The following keynotes opened to consider a broader dimension, including practices from consolidated contemporary authors that work with light and sculpture. Also questioning the preservation approach, Peter Bengsten raised issues that led to a lively discussion with the audience.

The next day started with a balance between quantitative and qualitative research methods and great quality examples of each approach were presented. It is pertinent, at this moment, to mention that is not usual, when dealing with ur-

ban creativity, to use quantitative methods and when this happens it may be of great effect due to the enormous number of extrapolations that can occur. These academic approaches were followed by a presentation by Lisbon Underdogs on their gallery and public art program practice. In the third panel, Brazilian authors and Portugal relations within communitarian creative practices were presented and discussed. The approach of the sub cultural as a specific area of analysis was combined with great results alongside the direct contact experience of Swedish reality.

The final presentation in the Fine Art faculty auditorium was a keynote address by Magda Sayeg, that in a sharp, honest, and incisive manner presented her work, motivations, and perspectives as author, and indubitable "mother" of "yarn bombing" as a global movement.

In the Mouraria Creative Hub (CIM) we experienced another "geography" – both in our physical location in Lisbon, and also in our experience of knowledge sharing. With a full room, both Sintra based Miguel (RAM) and Magda Sayeg presented details of their personal work process, sharing unedited and never revealed material.

We would like to acknowledge all that gathered for the seminar and for the production of the journal, and all that contributed with written work or critical reviews (members of the Scientific Committee). Thank you to all those who were with us in person, and who followed at a distance, sending us their remarks through the available channels.

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Seminar quantitative report:

198 inscriptions; 12 nationalities present; PT; ES; IT; DE; GE; SW; UK; USA; AU; FR; DN;
22 speakers (8 keynotes, 10 delegates, 2 members of executive commission);
2 venues in Historical Lisbon center (Fine Arts Faculty and Mouraria Creative Hub) ;

Journal (Volume 1) quantitative report:

64 received abstracts
31 full articles received
15 accepted articles without changes
12 accepted articles with changes

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Planned To Be Reclaimed: Public Design Strategies for Spontaneous Practices of Spatial Appropriation

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Abstract

Several contemporary studies on public space focus on its loss, in relation to an increase in people's disengagement from these types of spaces. Since the 1960s, a considerable part of urban culture has attempted to develop strategies for people to re-appropriate public space and to 'inhabit the city again.' This has defined a line of research that, although now consolidated, is still little known in its complexity. In the effort to create a unified framework for the different attempts through which architecture has historically responded to the rise of spontaneous forms of urban creativity, this paper outlines a short history of design strategies aimed at enabling and encouraging different forms of spatial appropriation. It also highlights a gradual shift from prescriptive and repeatable rules to site-specific approaches, prompting a new disciplinary convergence between urban planning and design, interior architecture, industrial design and public art.

Keywords: Urban design, Interior architecture, Spatial appropriation, Public spaces

1. Introduction

According to what emerges from a series of books published by Henri Lefebvre from 1963 to 1974 as part of his twenty-year study about everyday life, the sense of mutual belonging that develops between subjects and the spaces they inhabit would be essentially determined by their own process of production, or by the direct possibility that subjects have to control them, both socially and individually. From this point of view, the nature of urban space would be simply defined by the variable relationship between its use value and its exchange value, or between it being a collective artwork and it being a market product. An artwork is unique and irreplaceable, created through a process that, while implying some kind of work, is not limited to it. Contrariwise, a product is the result of repeatable and serialized gestures, thus it is repeatable and reproducible too (Lefebvre, 2007: 70).

Therefore, a city becomes a product when its inhabitants, voluntarily or not, do not take part in the production of its space; whereas, a city as an artwork represents a domain in which space does not respond to the logic of profit, in favor of a symbolic value able to generate a sense of common civic belonging (Lefebvre, 2007: 75). In this sense, the rupture between people and the production of their urban

space would emerge for the first time with the beginning of the industrialization process, whose mechanism tends to repress their inalienable 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1968). According to Lefebvre, the city has to be reclaimed through a non-violent urban revolution capable of liberating subjectivities in public space, with a symbolic act of collective re-appropriation that, although intellectually fascinating, still struggles to find a concrete spatial definition.

This process of re-signification begins to appear intelligible only after the publication of Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), which quickly became an essential reading both for sociologists and architects. According to de Certeau, the production of urban space is not only determined by the institutional 'strategies' of planning, design and management, but it is also made of countless 'tactics' – both individual and collective – that take the shape of everyday practices aimed at reclaiming public spaces through techniques of socio-cultural production. Thus, with the inclusion of people's personal spheres, cities explode in a multiplicity of uses, which gradually draws the attention of planners and designers on people's informal actions.

However, de Certeau's acknowledgement of the importance of such spontaneous practices proves crucial to an understanding of the need for personalization, which public space should satisfy. Nonetheless, according to a growing number of scholars, this argument is also very often put forward to support the thesis of the futility of architectural design as a tool for improving urban quality, in favor of other practices, which are developed in between public art and participatory process. In most contemporary studies on public space, informality seems to be a quality both of the social process and the spatial construction of such places, and a precondition of spontaneity in the definition of hospitable spaces (Sola Morales, 1995; Doron, 2000; Papastergiadis, 2002). Although fascinating, this perspective implies a serious risk of underestimating the common opinion according to which it is acceptable to let these spaces go, taking a step back from the temptation to interfere in their destiny (Lang, 2008: 223). In this case, the proposed solution would only further fuel the problem, as a lack of interest and a state of neglect represent the first reasons in the actual crisis of public spaces (Madanipour, 2010: 239).

Following this belief, a significant part of urban design has aimed at identifying some concrete design tools that enable and encourage different forms of spatial appropriation, thus defining a line of research that, although now consolidated, is still little known in its complexity. Therefore, this paper aims at creating a unified framework for the different attempts through which architecture has historically responded to the rise of spontaneous forms of urban creativity. It describes how public space design redefined its strategies, and approaches the idea of 'making places' for the community, increasing the possibilities of intervention for users. It also focuses on the gradual shift of urban planning and design towards other scales, instruments, and objectives, in a sudden disciplinary convergence with interior architecture and industrial design. Nowadays, in an effort to enhance the individual's ability to recognize, define and transform the space they inhabit, public design increasingly takes the shape of a projective process, reversing the traditional formal definition of urban architectures.

2. An urban design counter-theory

In a widely read article published in 1980 by *Town Planning Review*, Bob Jarvis effectively describes the increasing

awareness of the centrality of users' experience within the disciplines related to urban design. According to the author, since the first half of the 1960s it is possible to recognize a new tradition that rejects the association of urban facts with artistic phenomena, and emphasizes their fundamental social character. This would result, for the first time, in Kevin Lynch's (1960) demonstration of an existing gap between the physical structure of the city and its actual use, as well as between the intentions of designers and the perceptions of users. This could represent the base for the development of a counter-hegemonic theory concerning urban design taking shape – albeit in embryo – from Jane Jacobs' (1961) work.

As the journalist and anthropologist writes in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, it is indeed not possible to conform the contradictions of reality to the general model that has erased any chance to live the city since the mid-nineteenth century (1961: 3). Her attack on the orthodox modernism of the Charter of Athens (1933), however, is not only an unprecedented change of perspective about urban design, but is also a seminal collection of concrete proposals to give people the opportunity to 'live the city again.' Assuming that the destruction of urban livability is attributable to the disappearance of variety – which is the general principle of urban operation – the author offers some operational tools, such as the mix of primary uses and buildings of different ages, small blocks, and the increase of population density. Although these instruments found only sporadic practical applications, thanks to Jacobs, concepts such as street life, diversity and livability gradually started to replace the previous criteria of separation and specialization, in a total redefinition of the urban lexicon that in few years – thanks to the 'translation' of architects and planners such as Jan Gehl and William Whyte – was completely endorsed by the culture of design.

Since 1971, for example, thanks to Gehl the concept of 'human scale' ceases to refer only to a symbolic dimension that projects must meet and begins to identify an area of effective intervention. In fact, with the term 'scale' Gehl means the measure of man that public space architecture must be able to accommodate in order to allow people to appropriate it, define some portions of personal territories, and dwell in them in a transitory way. For this reason his research – both theoretical and by design – articulates in a truly revolutionary

way the process of urban planning and design around some issues that actually affect the conformation and the equipment of open spaces, such as the quality and the position of seating, the articulation and the permeability of borders, or the potential of visual openings.

Since 1975, a similar approach has also been implemented by New York's Project for Public Spaces, which, through observations, surveys, interviews, and urban workshops, tries to transform public spaces around the world in 'places for the community' (Whyte, 1980: 3). It is from this experience that, thanks to William Whyte's direct contribution, the New York school of urban design has developed. Whyte's conceptual horizon focuses, as does Jacobs', on the concepts of density, street life, road alignment, integration and functional mix. However, his operational tools deal with the small scale able to shape welcoming open spaces. Once again, the need for urban planning to gain some design tools belonging to different disciplinary traditions is emphasized. This would allow the transformation of abstract spaces in places in which to live, and encourage people to 'regain' their urban spaces, both as part of a universal right to the city and as an effective institutional strategy of urban management.

3. Towards responsive public spaces

As noted by Matthew Carmona (2003: 7), what until twenty years earlier appeared to be little more than a kind of urban counter-theory, in the mid-eighties constituted the shared base of all activities concerning urban planning and design. If the 1960s were, indeed, characterized by the slow and partial transition from planning activity based on artistic criteria to a perspective focused on the social use of space, in this period a new idea of 'placemaking' – which is the attempt to build deeper connections between spaces' form, use and meaning – seems to take shape, reconciling the two previous positions and characterizing the uncoordinated efforts of a great part of design practices. In fact, from the strict prescriptions of Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard's Manifesto (1987) to Francis Tibbalds' neo-traditionalist revival (2000), all of the attempts attributable to this strategy show a common feature that seems to recall Kevin Lynch's latest theories.

In 1981, twenty-one years after his (1960) *The Image of the City*, Lynch published a theory on urban form and proposed

an operative framework capable of marking the future of urban design. In an attempt to identify the dimensions involved in the construction of places, Lynch once again wished for users' direct involvement, not only in the analytical phase, but also in the design and management stages. Through a series of empirical analyses, he demonstrated that the best way to improve the performance of an environment is to leave its control in the hands of its users, who have the interest and the knowledge to make it work better (1981: 164-165). This would allow the birth of real 'responsive environments,' as defined by a team of researchers from Oxford a few years later (Bentley et al., 1985), stressing the need for richer and more democratic spaces in order to maximize the opportunities of their users and considering the possibility of spatial personalization as part of the design process. In this sense, this does not only imply the opportunity to physically change the spatial configuration of an environment, but also its adaptability to different uses (Cooper Marcus and Francis, 1998: 8), the clarity through which its structure allows different activities, and its capacity to communicate or be misunderstood.

According to a successful term recently introduced by Henry Shaftoe's studies (2008), urban spaces must simply be 'convivial,' that is, to be able to offer functionally and symbolically appropriate spaces for the urban life of every single person. From this point of view, they would also represent a theoretical model capable of shaping a strongly inclusive urban environment, lowering the social and economic costs of the exclusive model of urban management described by Sharon Zukin (1995: 28).

In fact, the 'Designing out Crime' approach, which uses an expensive form of separation and specialization as a device for urban safety is gradually replaced by a substantially opposite strategy – 'Crowd out Crime' – which supports the highest vitality of space as a means to a costless urban regeneration. However, even though this approach could be extremely advantageous – both from social and economic points of view – it involves a commitment that is rarely systematically addressed by planning and urban design, as they both suffer from a congenital lack of appropriate tools for the task. Despite Jan Gehl's struggle to focus on a human scale, the idea of placemaking clashes with the need to define the repeatable and shared rules that are implicit in the approach of planning and urban design. Therefore, such concepts as

the appropriation of space, inhabiting the city, or placemaking can be part of the urban design technical vocabulary only through a disciplinary convergence aimed at taking into account the 'fine grain' of convivial places which Shaftoe refers to (2008: 7).

4. Urban interiors

Interestingly, as pointed out by Gianni Ottolini (2013), in the same period in which urban planning and design focused on the tools and strategies for letting people inhabit the city, interior architecture – whose main interest has always been the act of inhabiting – crossed its traditional domestic domain to face the public spaces of metropolitan life, with a specific approach that seems to be determined by the task of making urban architectures inhabitable. The first theoretical contributions about the blend of the 'urban' and 'interior' dimensions – from Hermann Sorgel (1918: 51) to Rudolf Arnheim (1977); and from Renato De Fusco (1978: 77) to Christian Norberg-Schulz (1979: 58) – still seem to focus on the necessity of enclosure. Nevertheless, during the 1960s, interior architecture finally abandoned the topological definition based on its opposition to an 'exterior,' and focused on the centrality of the human 'gesture,' which can transform an abstract space to a 'place-to-be' (Basso Peressut and Postiglione, 2005: 129).

Prompted by the independent studies of Aldo van Eyck (2008: 51) and Carlo De Carli (1967: 3), during the last thirty years this theoretical redirection has led interior designers and historians to the first formulation of binomial 'urban interiors,' according to which urban open places are not considered as voids but as architectural spaces to build and shape (Ottolini, 1987: 39). The investigation in this area develops around some key issues concerning the shape and the equipment of open spaces, such as the quality of their solid margins, or the attention to urban furniture as a link between architecture and design. Generally, the focus is always on the living dimension that projects should create, even in spatial contexts that are traditionally subject to a different functional and symbolic regime and that only in this way can qualify as 'urban interiors.' Therefore, research and practice on urban interiors concerns both the actual 'interiorization' of metropolitan collective spaces (Branzi, 2010, 178) and a new way to approach urban design, involving a greater attention to the human scale, not only as a metrical parameter,

but primarily as the dimension of inhabiting by 'taking care' of a place (Norberg-Schulz, 1984).

A possible history of this approach emerged after the eighth *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (1951), with designers' first attempts to increase the responsivity of public spaces, focusing on the human dimension of architecture. Even though seven years earlier Josep Lluís Sert had published an essay entitled 'The Human Scale in City Planning' (1944), it was only after the substantial failure of this conference that a growing part of the disciplinary culture started to focus on the identification of the relationship between physical space and people's socio-psychological needs, thus allowing architecture to reflect the different social and cultural patterns in a more accurate way (Smithson, 1957). Since the mid-fifties, as an alternative to contemporary cultural and design criteria, urban, architectural and industrial designers have started to look for intermediate spatial solutions – between public and private, collective and personal – capable of reaffirming an architecture that does not impose precise models, but is able to learn from any situation (van Eyck, 1962).

Suddenly, in some of the most relevant projects of this period – from Le Corbusier's roof terrace of Marseille's *Unité d'Habitation* (1947-52) to Aldo van Eyck's *Bertelmanplein* (1947) – public spaces ceased to be a uniform and undifferentiated field and became an uninterrupted series of intermediate places shaped on the measure of their personal use, capable of reflecting the real measure of human scale. The polyvalent articulation of their margins, which functionally and symbolically accommodated both individuals and crowds in an organic and adaptable shape ended up affecting a consistent part of the international debate – from Louis Kahn's *Salk Institute Plaza* (1959-65) to Paul Rudolph's *Boston Government Center* (1963-71); and from Gio Ponti's *De Bijenkorf Plaza* (1969) to Richard Meier's *Twin Parks Plaza* (1969-74).

From this premise, the 1960s became the time of a definitive spread of the concept of responsivity within urban space. On the one hand, thanks to the contributions of Robert Sommer (1959) and Edward T. Hall (1966), environmental psychology approached urban geography and reached a more conscious public space design, capable of overcoming those 'urban pathologies' that, by overcrowding and isolation, may

result in interpersonal violence. On the other hand, urban geography addressed the psychological and perceptual outcomes of the physical form of urban space (Lynch, 1960). Therefore, it is not surprising that, in these years, design investigations about urban open spaces were broadening and shifting from the mere articulation of their boundary surfaces to the definition of flexible or adaptable equipment, which started to challenge its degree of integration with the space in which it had been inserted.

A first conscious attempt in this direction was made in 1967 by the landscape architectural firm Zion & Breen in Paley Park's design, a public pocket park, privately owned and located in a Midtown Manhattan infill lot. The place, a tiny paved plaza surrounded by ivy walls and covered by a canopy of honey locust trees, was equipped with movable wire mesh chairs and tables, whose configuration was continuously varied by users looking for more shadow, calm or social interaction. It was this precarious arrangement that allowed its users not only to exert a control over that space but also to feel a kind of responsibility for its delicate equilibrium (Whyte 1980: 60-65). Therefore, the Paley Park experiment pushed a whole generation of designers, who were looking for new strategies involving greater engagement, to take into account the users' ability to control some specific terminals of urban equipment.

In the following decade, through the study of this equipment, architectural research seems to specialize, focusing its attention on the real public consistence of personal space. Starting from the study of the spatial claims implicit in the simplest daily practices, Herman Hertzberger (1973) and the Dutch structuralist school led the discussion on open space design beyond the criterion of representativeness that squares have always had to meet. They focused instead on a series of elements traditionally considered completely negligible, in order to increase architecture's potentialities of accommodation (Hertzberger, 1973).

During the 1980s, this search for interpretable architectural shapes aimed at encouraging a personal engagement with space generated a different strategic approach to public spaces that, in less than ten years, came to define a real design movement. With some interventions of contemporary public art, artists such as Richard Serra, Daniel Buren and

Vito Acconci showed how both the physical and symbolic conscious subversion of people's urban experience could bring them to question the very nature of their everyday environment, interpreting it in a personal way. This involved a clear articulation of polyvalent elements as well as the definition of a new architectural language that – from Bernard Tschumi's Parc de la Villette (1983) to West8's Schouwburgplein (1991); and from Pipilotti Rist's City Lounge (2005) to BIG's Superkilen Urban Park (2013) – has been predominant for the following thirty years. Mobile and interactive terminals, sinuous surfaces, bright colors and, more generally, a formal repertoire deeply influenced by the visual arts, design, and digital graphics reflect the character of a sort of 'playful modernism' (Mosco, 2010:180), through which any participatory possibility is resolved in the form of an uncommitted game. In other words, they highlight an approach based on a spectacular form of personal involvement with public space, meant to arouse curiosity, surprise, and also uneasiness, which in a few years will concern a whole series of minimum projects designed to reinterpret the city – from Michael Rakowitz to Damien Gires; and from Florian Riviere to Oliver Bishop-Young (Klanten and Hubner, 2010).

In the second decade of the new millennium the house, along with the playground, will make its appearance as a typological and spatial reference. It will progressively identify the public sphere not as separate from the private dimension, but rather as an extension of the process of inhabiting that does not seem to meet any differentiation. As in their own homes people are free to create their own spaces by modeling a kind of interior 'shell' made of objects, the same possibility is offered to them outside thanks to the definition of a concave and hospitable place that uses a formal and functional repertoire recalling the architecture of a domestic space. Thus, in a series of public projects – such as Raumlabor's Open House (2010), SABA's Children Corner or Collectif Etc.'s Place au changement (2011) – the house becomes the ultimate symbol of an interpretative flexibility that, today, seems to be required by the whole urban space (Klanten et al., 2012: 216-249).

In fact, during the last twenty years, a gradual anthropological transformation has started pushing the act of inhabiting beyond the boundaries of privacy, and the planned, organized and symbolically characterized space of the city, with

the inclusion of citizens' domestic spheres, has exploded into a plurality of uses and meanings. Today, urban spaces reproduce, on a larger scale, forms and mechanisms of domestic interiors, in an 'interiorized', 'personal' and variable dimension, that drives design disciplines towards a gradual overlapping of distant traditions (Leveratto, 2014: 91). Thus, while interior architecture is trying to overcome its traditional spatial domain to face the public or semi-public spaces of metropolitan life, urban planning attempts to interpret and map the 'swarm' of spatial practices that seems to structure the city through a continuous process of personal re-signification (Hillier and Hanson, 1984; Leach, 2009; Ratti, 2014).

5. Changes of paradigms

This sort of disciplinary integration involves both a significant change in scale and a new way of looking at the morphogenetic mechanisms of urban projects, from a series of sequential operations – from a larger to a smaller scale – to a simultaneous process in which various decisional agents interact to generate a complex spatial system. Each strategy attempted by architects, designers, and artists in order to enhance the responsive dimension of urban space has moved the conceptual center of design from its margins to its 'interior,' in a substantially projective process of formal definition. Albeit the existence and recognisability of a circumscribed space is always relevant in this process, its formal quality seems to lie not so much in the geometric construction of its perimeter, but in its articulation in fields and objects that can be recognized, employed, and personally modified – in a word, 'inhabited' in a direct and non-mediated way. Therefore, more than the urban morphological matrix, central to such projects is the degree of integration or mobility of that articulation, its exclusivity or its openness, its strictly symbolic connotation or its interpretative flexibility – in other words, everything that can reflect the different possibilities of use offered to its inhabitants.

The possibility of enhancing the creative features of human behavior does not involve a reversal of the design process that goes from the definition of a single element to that of a whole space. It rather entails a gradual shift of interest from the shape of space to the forms of its 'use' – to the many opportunities for personal appropriation that the architectural construction allows and encourages, both functionally and symbolically. In drawings as well as in stone, movements, paths, and the personal actions of those who use the space

become part of a project that shows in its own structure their traces and their ability to shape a place that they own and to which they belong at the same time. In these cases, urban space develops, as any other interior, around the 'gesture' of the subjects who inhabit it, in a dimension in which the possibility to exert a real control on their environment is explicit, even though only symbolically. This is a control through a gradual process of bodily projection, which represents the 'range' of the innate ability to live in the world by 'taking care of it.'

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Photography and Classification of Information: Proposed Framework for Graffiti Art

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Abstract

Street and urban creativity is a global phenomenon and graffiti art is one of its manifestations. This article briefly discusses some approaches to photography as to one of the main visual research methods in the research of graffiti art works. Moreover, a framework for the classification of information contained in photographs of graffiti art works is proposed. A three level system of classification is introduced based on a provided example.

Keywords: Photography, Graffiti, Framework, Classification, Indexing, Art

1.1 Introduction

The dynamic research field of ‘Street and Urban Creativity’ is very wide. This area includes various forms of expression ranging from performing arts to diverse visual forms of self-expression. One global and relatively unified, but also controversial, form of street and urban creativity (Ganz, 2004; Austin, 2010; Schacter, 2013) is represented in the form of graffiti art (Ganter, 2013).

Graffiti art is characterized by four visual forms (genres): tag, piece, throw-up and character. The roots of graffiti art are located in Philadelphia of the late 1960s (Ley and Cybriwsky, 1974) and in New York City of the early 1970s (Castleman, 1982; Stewart, 1989). This predominantly urban phenomenon started spreading to the rest of the world, from the East Coast of the USA, in the 1980s (Chalfant and Prigoff, 1987; Kramer, 2009).

This article discusses photography as one of the main research instruments in the study of the ‘graffiti art’ phenomenon. This visual method of investigation is extremely important in the graffiti art research, as graffiti art works are very ephemeral.¹ A photograph is mostly the solitary proof of existence of a graffiti art work, even though a photograph embodies ‘only’ a representation of a ‘real’ graffiti art work. Habitually graffiti art is painted over with new graffiti art or such works are whitewashed. We are able today to visually

trace back the origins of the graffiti art culture, in New York City of the 1970s, only due to the matchless research of the teacher, artist and art historian Jack Stewart (1926–2005), who tirelessly and systematically photographed the developmental stages of graffiti art on the sides of subway trains (Stewart, 2009; Duncan, 2010). All early graffiti art from New York City of the 1970s-80s were “destroyed” by the Metropolitan Transit Authority, as was also remarked by the art historian Margo Thompson (2009: 7). These early pieces of graffiti art were destroyed, even though they represented a unique form of expression to tourists visiting New York (Chalfant and Prigoff, 1987: 7; Austin, 2001: 2-5). Photographs are still, till the present day, not only very important to the graffiti artists who produce them, (Snyder, 2006), but they are equally significant for researchers who make use of the “photo elicitation” research method (Snyder, 2009: 196). Nowadays it is profitable to make use of the available digital technology, which allows researchers to create their own photographic visual archives for research purposes.² Several suggestions on how to take optimal photographs of graffiti art are discussed in the next section 2.1.³

Further, this article proposes a supplementary three level classification system of the information from photographs of graffiti art (see section 3.1); this form of ‘database’ is an extension of the visual data contained in a graffiti art work. The proposed classification system of information aims to

provide a possible directional orientation for fellow researchers in the data gathering process in regards to graffiti art. The framework is derived mainly from research conducted in the Information, Computer and Library sciences (Shatford, 1986; Layne, 1994; Berinstein, 1999; Jaimes and Chang, 2000; Jørgensen et al., 2001; Layne, 2002; Hixson, 2003; Hollink et al., 2004; Gottlieb, 2006). The classification system of information is profitable in particular to art historians, but also to other investigators studying the visual culture of graffiti artists. The proposed conceptual framework is specially customized for maximum impact in the data gathering process. The framework could provide international researchers with a unified approach towards graffiti art.⁴ This suggested classification system was developed based on my long personal experience in this specific up-and-coming research field, as there is a need for accurate and appropriate information in regard to graffiti art.

To conclude, this article discusses photography as one of the key research methods in graffiti art research. The ephemeral nature of graffiti art conditions researchers to quickly acquire the 'right' image for their own research purposes. Techniques such as the stitching of photographs, incorporation of scale or the taking of photographs with the correct audience in mind are highlighted. The conceptual framework, in regards to the classification system of information of graffiti art, is introduced and practically described, based on a specific example of a photograph.

2.1 Photography

Photography is one of the most powerful research tools for the visual exploration of the graffiti art culture. Photography should be consistently used in graffiti art research, as graffiti art is a visual art form. Nowadays, the storing of photographs is easy, because of the availability of modern information technologies. For researchers it is of the most importance and advantage to be able to repeatedly take photographs of graffiti art and the urban environments where the graffiti appears. Photographs can be conveniently stored in a digital research archive. These photographs provide a researcher with plentiful visual information for future evaluation, as graffiti art is a very ephemeral form of expression. Graffiti art and the urban environment changes over time and the knowledge of a researcher concerning the graffiti art culture grows with time. With an extensive research archive at hand – containing several hundreds or thousands of photographs – a

researcher can in the future formulate new hypotheses and conclusions.

The photography of graffiti art is very useful especially for art students. I personally shot thousands of digital photographs of graffiti art throughout my own research. This number also includes hundreds of images of the urban landscape that harvests graffiti art works, as the urban landscape is the 'canvas' of graffiti artists.

It needs to be stated that in the hands of the researcher, photography represents a very powerful tool, as the researcher often influences the presentation of his research through photographs. It is important to always bear in mind that the representation of graffiti art is always contextual to its environment, as graffiti art is a site-specific art form (see Figs. 1–4). Compare for example the possible presentation of the graffiti art within the graffiti art productions in Figs. 1–6. In Figs. 1–6, it is demonstrated that a particular piece can be presented from different viewpoints ranging from general to detailed. For research purposes related to visual arts the presentation in Fig. 4 would be the most appropriate one. However, for urban space researchers Fig. 1 would be more fitting. Sociologists as well as art historians might also be interested in the production process of graffiti art. Such a graffiti art production is shown in Fig. 5–6, whereby a researcher takes parallel images of the location where a graffiti art work is being produced and later stitches these photographs together in a computer graphic software environment (Fig. 5). The angle for taking photographs is important as it influences the final stitched photograph, as is shown in Figs. 5–6, where one stitched image was taken parallel to the wall (Fig. 5) and another sideways from the same spot (Fig. 6).

To sum up, photography is a very important method for graffiti art research, although there is room for improvement in the data gathering process. This is shown in the subsequent subsection 3.1, which discusses the possibility of adding information to a photograph of a piece of a graffiti art work.

3.1 Classification of Information: Suggested Framework for Graffiti Art

The photography of graffiti art is typically the only way a graffiti art work is preserved and also therefore, images of graffiti art represent the most valuable resource for the research community. However, a photograph of graffiti art contains much more information than only the representation. Information contained in an image can be, and should

be, systematically classified. Such accumulated and classified information represents an invaluable data research archive for further inquiry. My continuous work with my own research archive showed that there is much more information contained in the photographs of graffiti art than I made use of. This realization led to the formulation of a possible framework, which is derived from the very progressive field of information technologies (Hollink, Schreiber, Wielinga and Worring, 2004). As graffiti art has its own specifics the framework proposed here is not strictly following the computer and library sciences classification systems.

The classification system introduced and presented here has the potential for adjustments, in regards to the needs of an individual researcher or a research institute, but can be readily used as it is. The framework is based on the following three-level approach to an image of a graffiti art work: Bio and nonvisual data, Visual characteristics, and Description (see framework structure in Figs. 8–10). An example of this introduced framework is provided in Tables 1–3, based on the photograph in Fig. 7.⁵

All the introduced classification categories of information are derived from a single photograph, after sufficient knowledge of a local or global graffiti art work and graffiti art culture is obtained by the researcher. Such accumulated and reliable data can be perfectly used for quantitative analysis by the use of statistical methods.

3.1.1 Bio and nonvisual data

The suggested three-level framework starts with the 'Bio and nonvisual data' level, represented in its structure in Fig. 8. This level contains the categories Known title, Event, Author/-s, Date of Production, Country, Width and Height, Longevity till, Costs, Surface and Photographer, which are subsequently explained and described.

'Known title' of a work – if identified, obtained from interviews or obvious from a description in the work itself. The name of an 'Event', where the particular work was produced. This can be a jam or a competition, which would be an 'Official' event or the work could have been also produced as a 'Spontaneous' act. Further, a work has its 'Author/-s', who might be affiliated with a 'Crew' or the crew itself might have authored a work. A work can be due to such a fact, or due to other facts, produced on a 'Collaboration' basis. Collaborative works are for example common in Malaysia (Novak, 2015). Author's 'Nationality' is of interest, as a piece of graffiti art could have been created by a local or by a visiting

graffiti artist from another city or country – 'Tourist/Visiting from'. If a researcher gathers photographic material during live painting sessions, the identification of the 'Date of Production', the 'Duration' – time of production of a graffiti art work and the 'Country', 'City', and 'Location' at which such a work was created is usually guaranteed. The researcher should at the same time be aware of the legal state-of-affairs during such a production. Therefore the researcher should possess the knowledge, if the author/-s had 'Permission' for the production of such a work and how significant was the actual 'Visibility' of the produced work at its location, as the examined work is a piece of graffiti art, that needs to primarily attract attention. The category 'Width and Height' is targeting an exact measurement of scale of graffiti art (Novak, 2014). If the exact measurements of a piece of graffiti art are not known, an 'Approximate' size of a work can be derived from the architectural structure's scale or from other hints in the photograph. 'Longevity till' shall present information about the longevity of a piece of graffiti art, as most graffiti is rather quickly removed or painted over. However, some graffiti art can be 'Preserved on' canvases, plywood boards and on other, rather mobile, surfaces – generally in public or private possession. Nevertheless, a currently completely lost (destroyed) piece of graffiti art was 'Painted over by' or 'Crossed by' another graffiti artist or the work was 'Buffed' by the authorities. 'Costs' category can indicate if a piece of graffiti art was 'Self' financed by a graffiti artist or if the work's production was financed by a 'Sponsor'. 'Surface' category refers to the properties of a canvas of a graffiti art work, as to a wall (mural), urban objects and to other surfaces, which can be 'Mobile' or 'Static'. The last class category in this level of classification is in determining the information about the 'Photographer' of a particular piece of graffiti art and about the date the image was taken – 'Date Taken'. Further, if the photograph was obtained from another 'Source', the source is listed.

Table 1: Bio and nonvisual data (see Fig. 7)

Known title:	x		
Event:	Kul Sign Festival 2012		
	Official:	Yes	
	Spontaneous:	x	
Author/-s:	SIEK, BONE		
	Crew:	PHBKLK, ZNC	
	Collaboration:	Yes (SIEK, BONE)	
	Nationality:	Malaysian	
		Tourist/Visiting from:	x
Date of production:	25 February 2012		
	Duration:	4 hours +	
Country:	Malaysia		
	City:	Kuala Lumpur	
	Location:	Riverbank at Pasar Seni LRT station	
		(Google Maps: 3.143514, 101.695202)	
		Permission:	Yes
		Visibility:	High
Width and height:	Height: 313 cm		
	Approximate:	x	
Longevity till:	Present (September 2014)		
	Preserved on:	Wall	
	Painted over by:	x	
	Crossed by:	x	
	Buffed:	x	
Costs:	Unknown		
	Self:	No	
	Sponsor:	Yes: Kul Sign Festival 2012	
Surface:	Concrete wall (mural)		
	Mobile:	No	
	Static:	Yes	
Alteration by:	x		
Photographer:	David Novak		
	Source:	Own research archive	
	Date taken:	26 February 2012	

3.1.1 Visual characteristics

'Visual characteristics' represent the second level of classification, as indicated in the structure in Fig. 9 and contains the following four main categories described subsequently – Coloring, Form, Segmentation in a photograph and View. 'Coloring' classifies the graffiti art in regards to a basic coloring scheme expressed in the categories 'Monochrome', 'Duotone' and 'Multicolored'. It is assumed that all photographs are in color (not in black-and-white) and this category refers therefore to the graffiti art itself and not to the photograph. 'Form' determines the represented graffiti art forms: 'Tag', 'Throw-up', 'Character' or 'Piece'. In addition, a graffiti art

work could have been produced as a part of a 'Production', when at least two graffiti artists produce a larger work with a shared background. During a graffiti art production some of the participating graffiti artists often create certain, shared, visual elements – 'Elements by'. However, 'Segmentation in Photo' refers to the photograph of graffiti art itself. A photograph of graffiti art can represent the 'Full' graffiti art work or only its 'Part' and a photograph may represent a graffiti art work from a 'View' from the 'Front' or from an 'Angle'. A photograph could be also 'Stitched #' from various single photographs, which should be indicated as well. These details were discussed in section 2.1 above.

Table 2: Visual characteristics (see Fig. 7)

Coloring				
	Monochrome:	x		
	Duotone:	x		
	Multicolor:	Yes		
Form				
	Tag:	x		
	Throw-up:	x		
	Character:	(Yes)		
	Piece:	Yes [SIEK]		
		Production:	Yes	
			Elements by:	Character by BONE
Segmentation in photo:	No			
	Full:	Yes		
	Part:	x		
View				
	Front:	Yes		
	Angle:	x		
	Stitched #:	x		

3.1.1 Description

The third and final level of information classification in a photograph of graffiti art is 'Description'. The structure of this level is represented in Fig. 10. The structure in Fig. 10 contains the three main categories: Image elements, Object/Scene content and Media. These are subsequently explained and described.

The 'Image elements' category describes the actual content, subject matter of a graffiti art work represented in a photograph. This content is distributed among image elements 'Letterforms', 'Background' and, if present, a 'Character' or more characters. The letterforms represented in a graffiti art work need to be further correctly interpreted as 'Exact letterforms'. Subsequently, these letterforms, especially in pieces, should be assigned to a 'Style' specification.⁶ The 'Design elements' description should contain other additional visual design elements in a letterform-oriented graffiti art work, such as bits, or cuts for example. Further, a letterform-oriented graffiti art work can feature substituted letterforms with characters.⁷ This substitution of a letterform is quite common in pieces, as in Fig. 7, and should be, if present, listed in the section 'Substitute for'. The 'Background' of a graffiti art work can be either created or already present on a surface, which might not be clear for an observer of a photograph and therefore this fact should be stated in the category 'Created/Not'. The type of a background should be further described under 'What'. 'Character' is linked to the 'Object/Scene Content' class. A 'Generic object' or a 'Generic scene' is for example an 'apple, man, chair, city, landscape, indoor, outdoor, still life, and portrait'. A 'Specific object' or a 'Specific scene' is for example 'Bill Clinton, Eiffel Tower, Paris, Times Square, Central Park'. An 'Abstract object' or an 'Abstract scene' is for example "sadness, happiness, power, heaven, and paradise" (Jørgensen, Jaimes, Benitez and Chang, 2001: 5). 'Action' supplementary enriches the information about the action, if any. The 'Media' class defines the tools a graffiti art work was created with, as 'Spray paint', 'Stationary' and 'Paint'. There are two main categories of spray paint, 'Professional' and the common 'Hardware' spray paint. It is also of formal interest to state, under 'Caps used', if standard hardware caps were used or if professional graffiti art caps were used for the production of a graffiti art work. 'Stationary' tools are used generally for the production of sketches, as sketches represent also graffiti art only in another type of media. Nowadays, emulsion

paint represents another medium used for the production of graffiti art. In the past emulsion paint was used only for backgrounds. Therefore, it is common to encounter graffiti art created in mixed media with a 'Brush' or 'Roller' as tools of production.

4.1 Conclusion

This methodological paper announced a possible classification system for information obtainment from and about single photographs representing graffiti art. This introduced framework is useful as a base for the establishment of a research archive containing a higher quantity of photographs. Such a database could even be further developed into a properly programmed computer database and several institutions, centers – for example a visual art oriented university department – could internationally share accessible, systematically classified data. This would also help to establish a proper understanding of graffiti art works, as these are according to art historians under-researched for 40 years, even though graffiti art is a part of contemporary arts and urban life. Data inserted into this proposed database needs to be collected by researchers as soon as possible after a graffiti art work has been identified as worth being indexed in such a database.¹¹

Table 3: Description (see Fig. 7)

Image elements					
	Letterforms:	Yes			
		Exact letterforms:	SIEK		
			Substitute for:	'I'	
		Style:	Wildstyle-3D ⁸		
		Design elements:	Bits, extensions, cuts		
	Background:				
		Created/Not:	Partially		
			What:		Sky, water, color
	Character:	Yes			
Object/Scene content					
	Generic object:	Monkey head, hands, chain			
		Specific object:	Mojo Jojo (Powerpuff Girls) ⁹		
			Abstract object:		Aggression
	Generic scene:	City, outdoor			
		Specific scene:	x		
			Abstract scene:		Destruction
	Action:	Water dam rapture ¹⁰			
Media					
	Spray paint:	Yes			
		Professional:	Zenith Cans, 94, (+?)		
		Hardware:	Pylox, Anchor, (+?)		
		Caps used:	Professional graffiti art caps		
	Stationary:	x			
	Paint:	Yes			
		Brush:	x		
		Roller:	Yes		

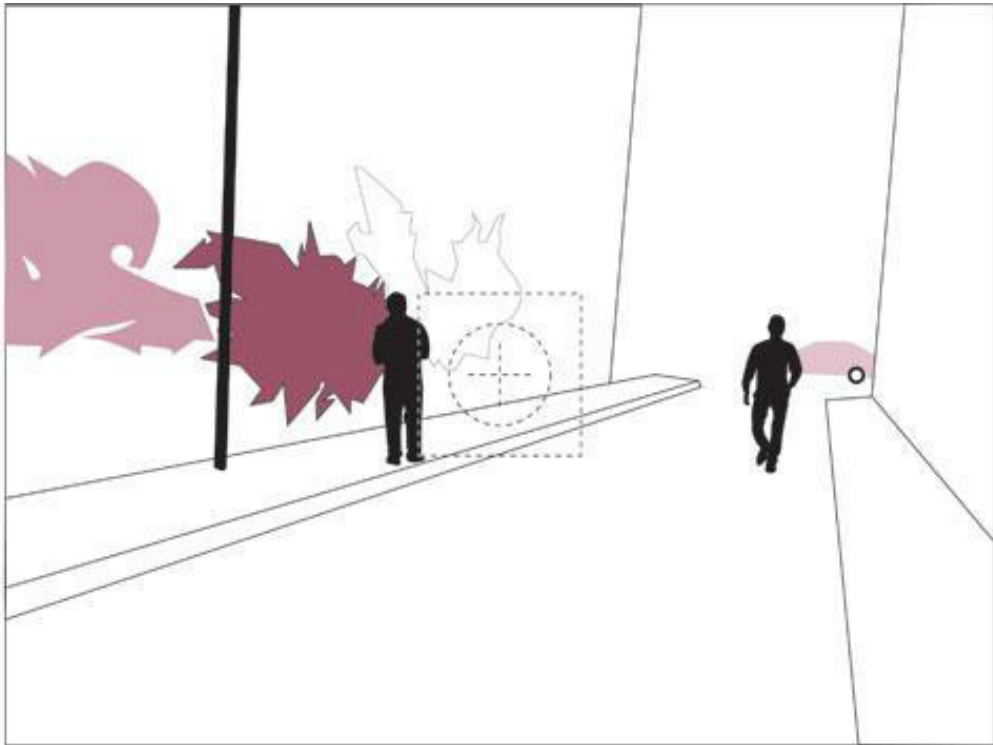


Fig. 1: Graffiti art works: general street view

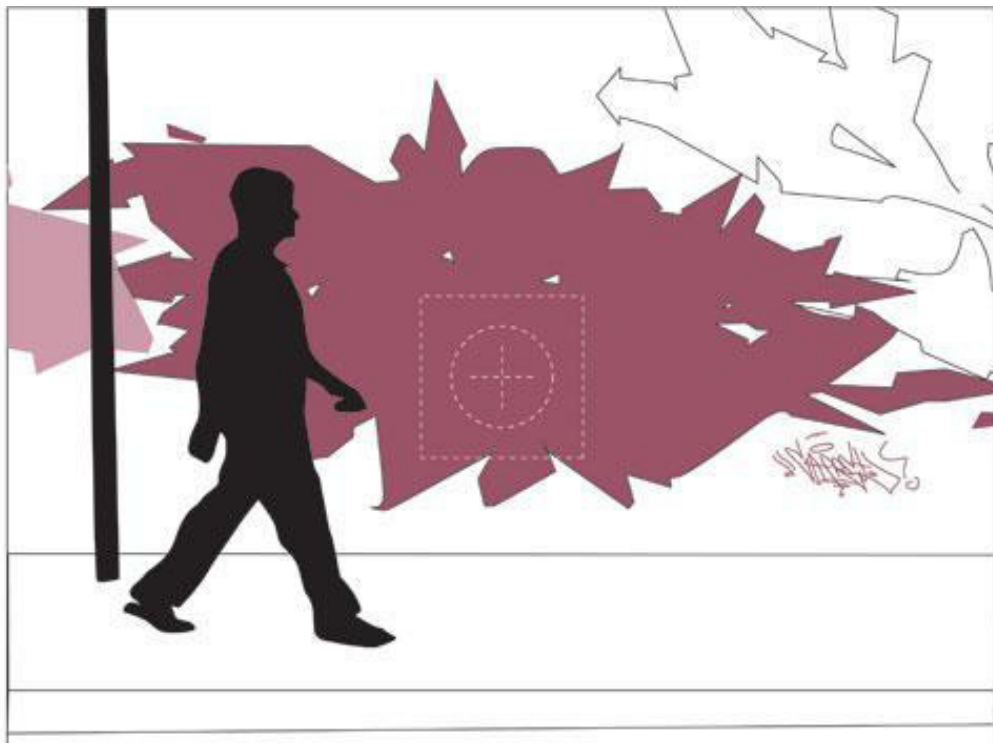


Fig. 2: Graffiti art work: human scale in photograph

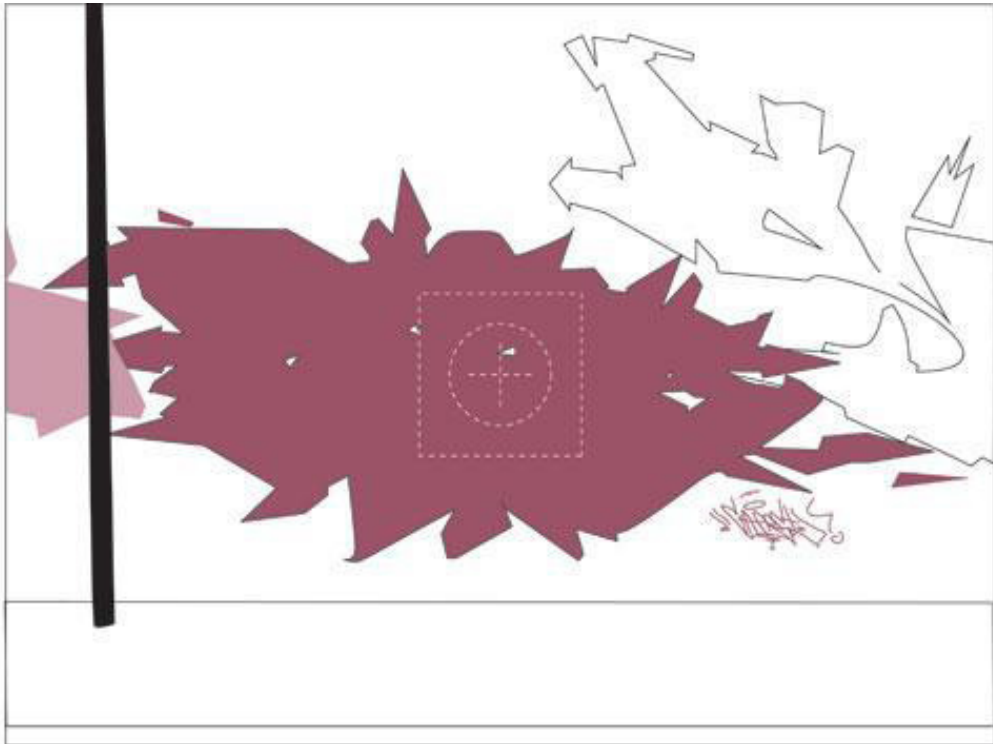


Fig. 3: Graffiti art work: focused piece in center of photograph

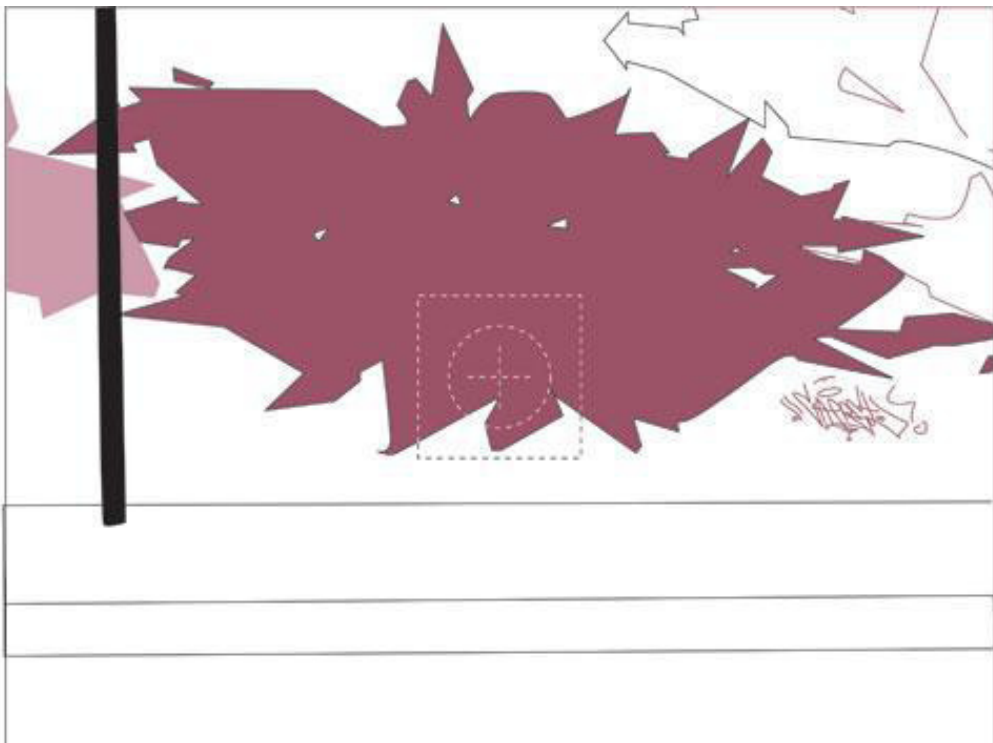


Fig. 4: Graffiti art work: focused piece aligned along the top edge of the photograph

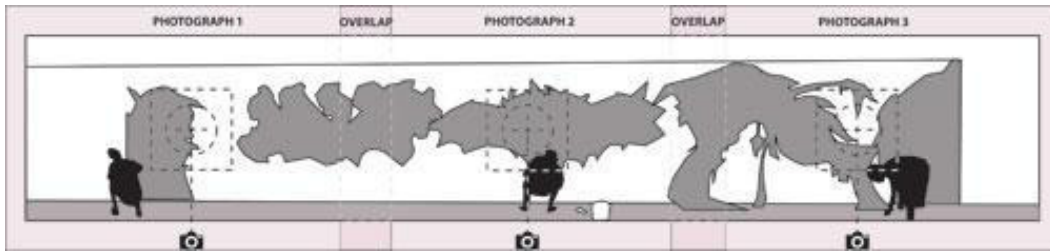


Fig. 5: Graffiti art production: stitched photographs (parallel)

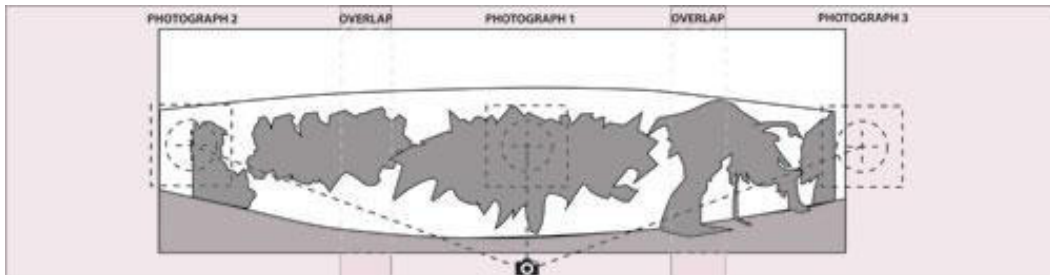


Fig. 6: Graffiti art production: stitched photograph with a fisheye effect



Fig. 7: First prizewinning graffiti art work at *Kul Sign Festival 2012*

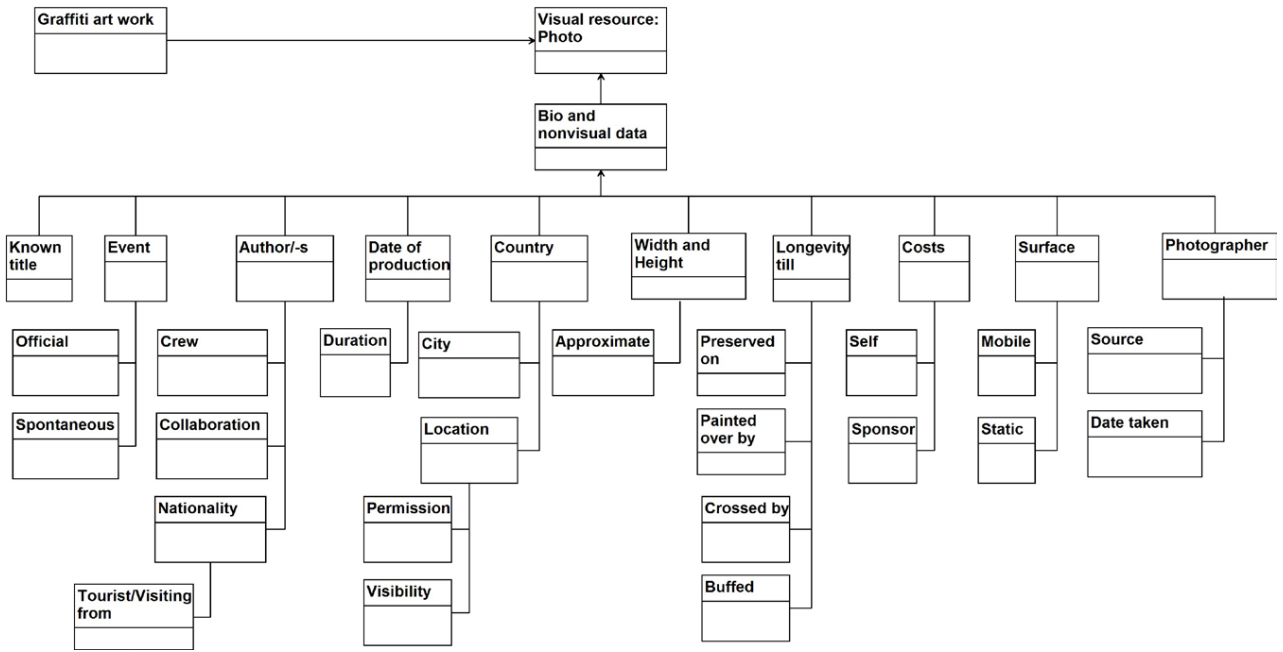


Fig. 8: Classification system of information: Bio and nonvisual data

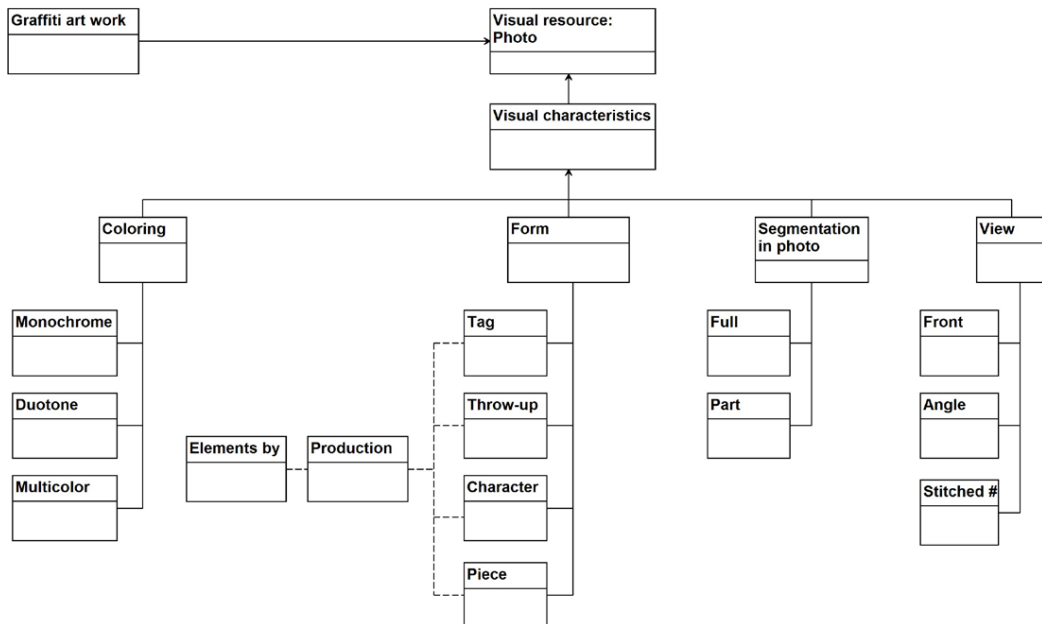


Fig. 9: Classification system of information: Visual characteristics.

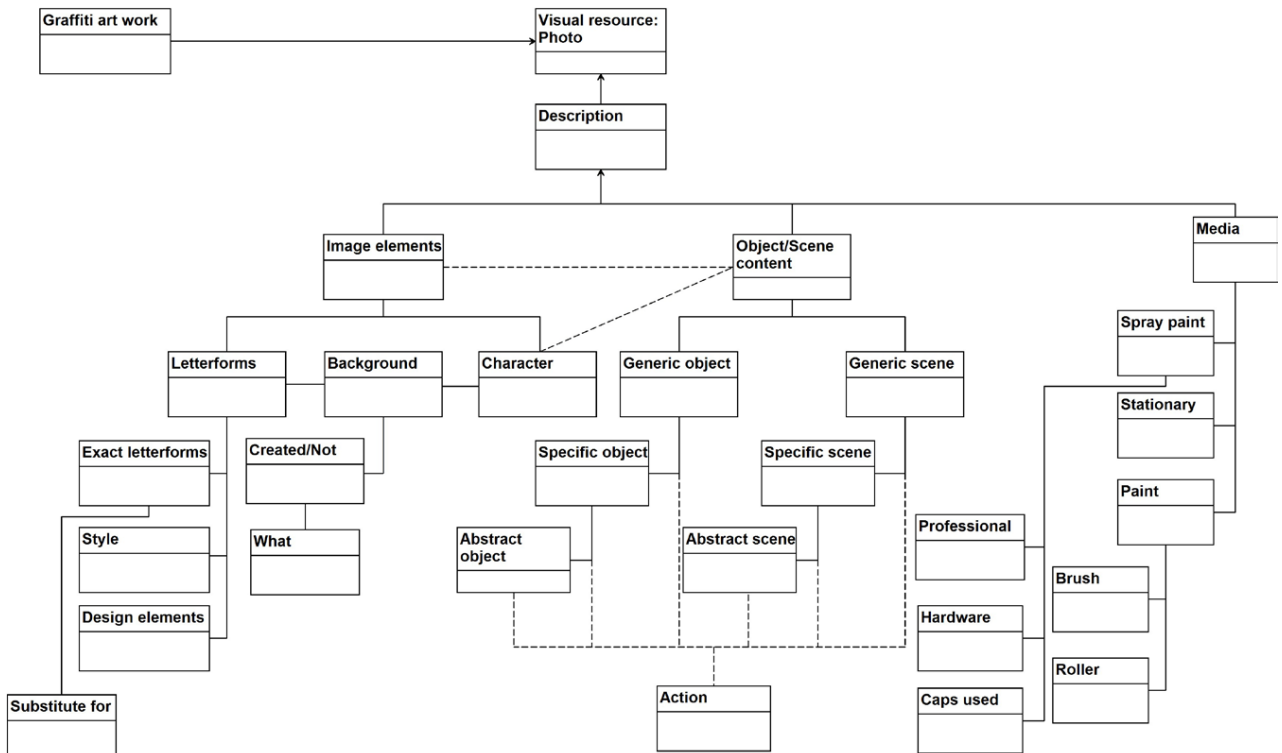


Fig. 9: Classification system of information: Visual characteristics

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Notes

1 - However, a graffiti art work – under certain circumstances – might survive years. It might be even preserved all together, but generally, the life span of such a work is rather short (several weeks). In the present article, a sketch on paper or a graffiti art work produced on canvas would be considered as a graffiti art work if such work was created in the ‘graffiti art’ genre by an graffiti artist.

2 - It seems that there are globally only a few graffiti research archives. One is in Germany, Das Berliner Graffiti-Archiv [The Berlin Graffiti-Archive] <<http://www.graffitieuropa.org/berlin/mensahschramm1.htm>>, and one in Austria, Wiener Graffiti- und Street-Art-Archiv [Graffiti- and Street-Art-Archive in Vienna] <<http://www.graffitieuropa.org/archiv1.htm>>.

3 - I realized only after collecting thousands of single photographs of graffiti art that there are certain more preferable ways to take such images.

4 - The conceptual framework could relatively be easily programmed as an IT database application.

5 - The authors of this graffiti art work are also to be seen in the closing sequence of KUL SIGN FESTIVAL 2012 (Gecko Scope, 2012). For more info on the Kul Sign Festival see also Tam (2012).

6 - For excellent studies about graffiti art styles, in pieces, see Gottlieb (2006; 2008).

7 - See for example the case of a SIEK piece in Novak and Yousof (2014).

8 - SIEK, 2012. Pasar Seni, Kuala Lumpur.

9 - BONE, 2012. Kuala Lumpur.

10 - SIEK, 2012. Pasar Seni, Kuala Lumpur.

11 - Field research and conduct of personal interviews with graffiti art works’ authors might be needed in order to obtain solid data.

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Longitudinal photo-documentation: Recording living walls

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Abstract

This working paper advocates a methodological approach to the study of street art and graffiti that is based on the documentation of single sites over time. Longitudinal photo-documentation is a form of data collection that allows street art and graffiti to be examined as visual dialogue. By capturing everyday forms of public mark making alongside both more recognizably 'artistic' images, and more visually 'offensive' tags, we aim to attend to graffiti and street art's existence within a field of social interaction. We describe a relevant analytic tool drawn from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis – the next turn proof procedure – which may be adapted in order to study street art and graffiti as a form of asynchronous, yet sequential, communication. This form of analysis departs from existent forms of analysis in that it is not concerned with the semiotics or iconography of decontextualized individual photographs of street art or graffiti. We present a worked analytic example to demonstrate the utility of longitudinal photo-documentation in making visible the dialogue amongst artists, writers and community members, and we employ the principles of the next turn proof procedure to illustrate the ways in which each party shows their understanding of the prior work on the wall via their own contribution to the 'conversation.'

Keywords: Longitudinal Photo-documentation, Visual Dialogue, Ethnomethodology.

1. Introduction

The burgeoning literature on street art and graffiti is replete with photo-documentation. From the early works of Brassai in Paris in the 1930s, Siskind in Chicago in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the highly influential photographs of Martha Cooper in New York in the 1970s and 1980s, to the contemporary work of Lee Bofkin (2014) and Rafael Schacter (2013), photography has long been key to capturing and studying these ephemeral public art forms. Without photographic records, graffiti and street art are unlikely to have achieved such an international scale and influence. Graffiti writers, street artists, and the many followers and fans of independent public art also engage in prolific online photo-documentation, sharing and cataloguing images through Instagram, Twitter and other forms of social media. Indeed, many works of street art may now only be viewed as photographs uploaded to social media and online forums, as they are commonly subject to removal by authorities or being written over by others and thus may have only a very brief tangible existence in the material world. Often collections of these images are organized according to the artist or writer producing them; geographic location; content or topic; me-

dium and method (e.g., stencils, paste-ups, stickers) artistic style; or historical period (e.g., 1970s New York; 1980s Paris; 2000s London). It follows that many scholarly examinations of these contemporary forms of independent public art appear primarily based on the individual image as object, often abstracted from local context, with an isolated photograph standing as the illustration of a particular work.

It is far less common for scholars to take a temporal and geographic site-based, rather than an object-based, approach to graffiti and street art (though see McAuliffe's (2014) study of legal walls in Sydney, Australia; Andron's (2014) study of Leake Street in Shoreditch, London; and Curtis' (2014) North American website Graffiti Archaeology for rare exceptions). Whilst these existing site-based photographic studies offer invaluable insights into the transformation of city walls over time, they tend to focus on aesthetically palatable work in areas where street art and graffiti are legal or at least condoned. This focus again reflects the hierarchy of aesthetic worth evident in the contemporary literature, in that street art appears more often documented and examined critically than is graffiti (Young, 2014). Further, the negative curation practices of local authorities mean that other everyday mate-

rial interactions with street art and graffiti (including tagging and other 'amateur' forms of textual engagement and mark making) are often removed in order to protect and preserve the integrity of the work it comments upon or supplements. These less aesthetically pleasing forms of mark making are arguably also worthy of documentation and scholarly attention. Indeed, to do so offers an alternative to the currently dominant object-centered approach to street art and graffiti.

2. Methodological approach:

Longitudinal photo-documentation

This working paper advocates a methodological approach to the study of street art and graffiti that is based on the detailed longitudinal photo-documentation of single sites, as images appear and disappear over time. We propose a dialogic and democratic analytic approach to the resultant series of images – with everyday forms of public mark making considered alongside more recognizably 'artistic' images, as a means of attending to graffiti and street art's existence as part of 'living walls', rather than as isolated images abstracted from their temporal and spatial social context. As MacDowall (2014: 36) has recently argued, street art should not be considered as the singular product of individual artists, but rather, as:

the cumulative effect of a range practices over time... the result of collective authorship... a 'cultural scene' or 'cultural ecosystem'... an unstable and permanently unfinished object, subject to both material decay and erasure and to semantic refashioning as the artworks and urban fabric change.

Longitudinal photo-documentation represents a complementary approach to MacDowall's (2014) novel application of the notion of stigmergy to street art. Stigmergy is a model originally derived from the study of the collectively organized activities of social insects that seeks to explain how they accomplish coordinated behavior (Grassé, 1959). However, rather than grounding the analysis of street art in terms of stimulus and response sequences, as such a biological model would suggest, an ethnomethodological approach to analysis, based on a temporally unfolding series of images, would arguably allow for a greater purchase on the intersubjective and interactive process of understanding and

meaning-making inherent in street art approached as a form of visual dialogue.

The logic of this local approach to documentation and analysis is holographic. Sacks (1995) asserted that cultures will demonstrate 'order at all points', and thus that even relatively small fragments of a culture may display the order inherent in the whole:

This view... understands order not to be present only at aggregate levels... but to be present in detail on a case by case, environment by environment basis. A culture is not then to be found by aggregating all of its venues; it is substantially present in each of its venues (Schegloff, 1995: xlvi).

Thus, the fine-grained analysis of the marks appearing on just one wall over a period of time, may in turn – like the fragment of the hologram that projects the whole – show us something important about how street art and graffiti, as a part of our everyday culture on a broader scale, may operate. Here, then, we seek to examine street art as a complex form of in-situ communication and resist an approach that would analyze street art as an 'object' thus neglecting the lifeworld of the works in context.

The next turn proof procedure is an analytic resource drawn from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. This technique offers a democratic route to analysis that is grounded in the display of understanding evident in parties' turns at speaking:

While understandings of others' turns (at talk) are displayed to co-participants, they... afford a proof criterion (and a search procedure) for the analysis of what a turn's talk is occupied with... The display of those understandings in the talk of subsequent turns affords... a proof procedure for [the] analysis of prior turns – resources intrinsic to the data themselves. (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974: 729)

Although ordinarily restricted to the analysis of verbal communication, the next turn proof procedure may be adapted to be applied to street art and graffiti as a form of asynchronous, yet sequential, visual communication. This represents a novel stance towards analysis that is not located solely in the semiotics or iconography of individual images, but which may also take account of the visual dialogue amongst a series of artists, writers and community members, with each

contributor showing their understanding of the prior work on the wall – whether still physically existent, or since erased or written over – via their own contribution to the ‘conversation.’ This is also a fruitful way of approaching the site-specificity of many works, which respond to aspects of the environment – thereby showing the stance of the artist/writer in their material interaction with that particular space.

Despite the fact that the next turn proof procedure is seldom utilized as a tool for analysis it represents a valuable analytic resource, as it is intrinsic to visual dialogue itself. Furthermore, it also likely reflects the quotidian experience of the viewers who encounter, understand, and may even contribute to, the ongoing conversations on city walls on a daily basis, as part of their passage through their neighborhood. However, due to the ephemerality of these forms of mark making, and the limitations of the currently popular forms of photo-documentation that decontextualize images from their spatio-temporal context, the interactive and dialogic character of street art and graffiti is not often captured in a form that would facilitate this route to analysis. In order to record this data as a form of sequential social interaction, or visual dialogue, the regular photo-documentation of single sites, over a sustained period of time, is necessary.

3. Analytic example

The following analytic example is drawn from our ongoing longitudinal photo-documentation of a wall in North London (Hansen and Flynn, 2015). We have been photographing this particular wall for a period of 36 months. The wall, located on Whymark Avenue in North London, was originally the site of Banksy’s *Slave Labour* (2012) that was removed without notice from the wall for private auction in February, 2013, much to the dismay of the local community. Many of

the subsequent works on the wall, especially in the period immediately following the removal of *Slave Labour*, provide visual and verbal commentary on this act of ‘theft.’ Figure 1, below, shows a stenciled work that appeared in April 2013, two months after Banksy’s work was removed.

This stenciled work presents the viewer with a puzzle: it is a representation of “a Banksy” in that it draws on design aspects conventionally associated with Banksy’s own (early) work (the monochromatic panda stencil; the wearable sign-board). Further, is apparently signed by Banksy (see the characteristic tag – albeit long out of use by Banksy himself – below the panda). Yet the work claims that it is not a Banksy. These contrasting claims together work to highlight the potential repercussions of attributions of authorship (or worth) to the survival of work in situ, a topical local concern given the recent ‘theft’ of Banksy’s own work for auction in Miami. The author of this stenciled piece thus displays their understanding of, and stance towards, the fate of the prior work on the wall.

Daily longitudinal photo-documentation of the wall allowed us to capture the additions subsequently made to this work by members of the public. Following the next turn proof procedure, we can approach these additions as contributions that show these authors’ understandings of the prior works on the wall. The morning after the panda stencil appeared, a passerby scribbled “Take me to America” in a speech bubble above the panda’s head (see Frame 2 of Figure 1). This projected speech has particular resonance in the relatively socio-economically deprived context of the neighborhood where the work is located: few local residents would have the means to travel to America. This contribution thus marks *Slave Labour*’s transatlantic journey to an auction house in America as in some sense enviable, but perhaps also out of



Figure 1. Whymark Avenue, London. April 2013. Photographs © Susan Hansen and Danny Flynn.

reach – as the faux Banksy panda stencil, like the average resident, is unlikely to be offered such an ‘opportunity.’

In the third frame of Figure 1, we can see a series of further marks made on or around the original stencil. These include a single question mark above the panda’s head, perhaps marking uncertainty as to its identity; a tiny starred halo be-

tween the panda’s ears, mocking its status as a work to be revered; and the block-lettered, “FREE ART NOW!” along the panda’s right arm, adopting the format of a political slogan to refer to the wrongfully ‘captured’ Banksy, and perhaps also to the unethical commodification of street art gifted for ‘free’ to the community.



Figure 2. Whymark Avenue, London. May 2014 – April 2015. Photographs © Susan Hansen and Danny Flynn.

In May 2014, a very large text based piece, by Mobstr, appeared on the wall (see Frame 1 of Figure 2). This covered the entire stretch of wall with block lettering that animated the imagined public reaction to the work. The text arrests the viewer with the exclamation, ‘DARLING LOOK, IT’S A BANKSY!’ However, this is followed by the dismissive retort, ‘DON’T BE SILLY MY DEAR, THAT’S JUST SOME VANDALISM’, to which the first speaker concedes, ‘OH RIGHT. YES, OF COURSE.’ This work thus provides critical commentary on everyday evaluations of the status, or worth, of street art. Like the prior works on the wall, it offers a critique of the objectification and commodification of street art; however, unlike prior works, it notes a sharp division between ‘A BANKSY’ worth exclaiming over and looking at, and ‘SOME VANDALISM’ not worthy of viewers’ attention. The author of this work displays his understanding of, and stance towards, the prior work on the wall, by adopting the perspective of the imagined passersby, who turn out to be not looking at the art at all, but are rather focused on the task of categorizing it as ‘A BANKSY’ or as ‘VANDALISM’, in order to determine whether it is worth looking at.

This large piece remained untouched until September 2014, when some of the letters were selectively painted over. The

modified dialogue (see Frame 2 of Figure 2) now read, “DO BE ILL” rather than “DON’T BE SILLY.” The author of this amendment displays their stance towards ‘the message’ of Mobstr’s work by translating the mocking middle class admonishment, “DON’T BE SILLY” into the working class urban slang, “DO BE ILL” – thus inverting the aesthetic/moral judgment satirically animated by the original piece.ⁱ This new appropriation enjoins the inner city viewer to “BE ILL” – or to engage with/in street art as a sublime and creative aesthetic activity, thereby disrupting the dismissive practices of looking exposed by Mobstr’s original piece.

The final frame of Figure 2 shows an amendment made to the work in April 2015, when the letters that had been erased the previous September were replaced, restoring the original message of the work. However, in contrast to Mobstr’s precisely rendered original lettering, these new letters were crudely painted with visible brushstrokes, giving the impression of an amateur, or everyday, author. In ‘restoring’ the text, this contributor to the ‘conversation’ demonstrates the value placed on the original work of ‘art’, by rejecting the illicit erasure accomplished by the prior author.

Figure 3, below shows, in summary, the most recent additions to the wall, in August 2015.

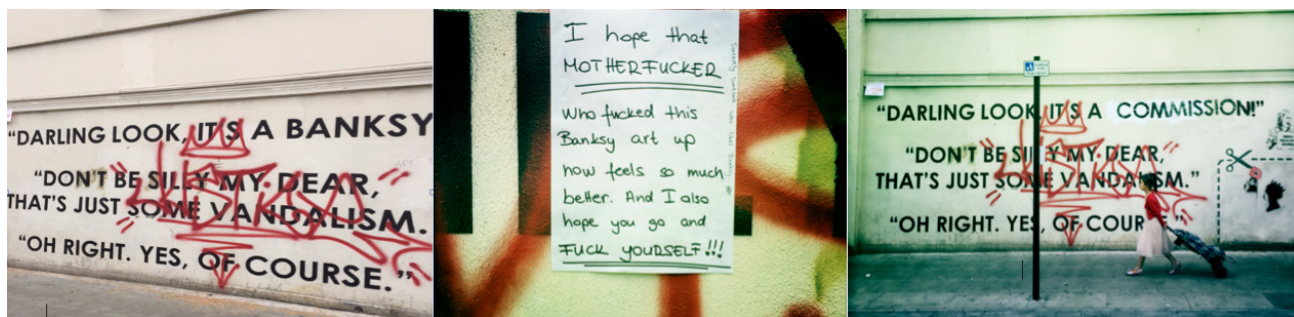


Figure 3. Whymark Avenue, London. August 2015. Photographs © Veronica Bailey.

A large red spray-painted tag – centered on the section of Mobstr’s text that dismisses work not worth looking at as “VANDALISM” appeared in early August 2015 (see Frame 1 of Figure 3) and was swiftly followed, the next morning, by a note taped directly on top of this ‘graffiti’ (see Frame 2 of Figure 3). The note (reminiscent of notes left on the windscreens of badly parked cars) employed obscene words to strongly chastise the author responsible for “f*cking this Banksy art up.” However it was signed formally (if anonymously): “Sincerely, someone who likes Banksy.” This very large traditionally rendered calligraphic tag was sprayed directly over Mobstr’s piece, in a clear breach of the insiders’ etiquette that prohibits capping, or writing over the work of others. Indeed, the writer of the note responds to this amendment to the wall as an act of destructive aggression, but only insofar as the tag writer has apparently willfully ruined the valuable piece of “Banksy art” it has defaced.

Later that same week, Mobstr’s original text was again changed (see Frame 3 of Figure 3). The words “A BANKSY” were replaced with “A COMMISSION” so that the work now read, “LOOK DARLING, IT’S A COMMISSION!” This alteration operates as a correction for the author of the note, who has mistakenly attributed authorship of Mobstr’s piece to Banksy. It is also perhaps a veiled insult to Mobstr, in that it is effectively an accusation that he has placed this large work on the wall with some form of permission from the authorities. This amendment also provides wider critical commentary on the increasingly popular practice of commissioning street art murals – as the only work on the street that everyday viewers consider aesthetically palatable, or “worth

looking at.” This addition to the wall thus also paradoxically affirms Mobstr’s own commentary on the hierarchy of worth inherent in viewers’ practices of looking. This final author therefore demonstrates their understanding of several ‘prior turns’ at communication on the wall, as their visual/textual response appears to address not just the immediately prior author (the writer of the note of protest), but also Mobstr, as the author of the original work that they have now altered, and the wider community – or the viewers of the work addressed by this now collaboratively authored text-based piece.

4. Conclusion

Longitudinal photo-documentation is a form of data collection that allows for street art and graffiti to be examined as a form of visual dialogue. We have argued that the next turn proof procedure (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974) may be adapted in order to study street art and graffiti as a form of asynchronous, yet sequential, communication. This stance towards analysis diverges from existent forms of analysis in that it does not rely on the semiotics of decontextualized individual images. Rather, as our brief worked example shows, longitudinal photo-documentation allows us to make visible, for subsequent analysis, the dialogue amongst artists, writers and community members, with each party showing their understanding of the prior work on the wall via their own contribution to the ‘conversation.’

Following Sacks’ (1995) ethnomethodological focus on the small scale, the mundane, and the obvious we have cho-

sen to restrict our focus here to the idiographic, the local, and the particular in documenting the works that appeared on, and were then erased from, a particular London city wall over a period of time (see Hansen and Flynn, 2015). In geographical terms, it is true that this represents a very small sample indeed. Given that street art is a global phenomenon, how then might such a circumscribed local focus be justified? We would argue that a global focus risks obscuring local practice. As MacDowall (2014: 37) notes, any particular piece of “unauthorized [art] creates the conditions for its own interactivity, ‘authorizing’ further unauthorized use” and thus often provoking a series of works in situ. We seek to capture the dialogue and social interaction integral to these ephemeral works.

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Street Art and related terms – discussion and working definition

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Abstract

This paper gives a short introduction and discussion of the term Street Art and related terms like Graffiti and Urban Art. A major part discusses my definition of Street Art and other definitions and the differences and commonalities of these terms. Street Art consists of self-authorized pictures, characters, and forms created in or applied to surfaces in the urban space that intentionally seek communication with a larger circle of people. Street Art is done in a performative and often site-specific, ephemeral, and participatory manner. Street Art is mostly viewed online. It differs from Graffiti and Public Art. I quote first and foremost German researchers that are not translated into English but in my opinion should be part of the international academic discussion.

Keywords: Street Art, Urban Art, Graffiti, Working Definition, Overview, Summary, Terms.

1. Introduction

“What is Street Art?” This was the first question in a Call for Papers for a Street Art conference in New York in March 2015 as well as for another one in Nice in September 2015. Cedar Lewisohn, curator of the Street Art show at Tate Modern in 2008, blustered in an international Street Art conference in Lisbon (2014) about academic writers who deal with Street Art being fans rather than critical academics. What he said, is, in my opinion, just a problem of communication – i.e., what is not available in English simply might not exist in the minds of some researchers. Since about 2005, a range of academic authors have already tried to answer the question, “What is Street Art?” A lot of them don’t write in English.

This paper is a short introduction and discussion of the term Street Art and related terms. This is necessary as Street Art often gets blurred with, for instance, Public Art, Graffiti or Urban Art. Here, I primarily cite the work of German researchers yet to be translated into English that, in my opinion, should be part of the international academic discussion.

2. Graffiti – in brief

Today, the term Graffiti, a relative of Street Art, is associated with a particular form of Graffiti called Style Writing, a.k.a.

contemporary graffiti, underground graffiti, or subculture graffiti. This “American” Graffiti spread from the USA to be quantitatively the most dominant in the Western world since the late 1960s. Style Writing (as I call this form of Graffiti here) is name writing in the form of little (name) tags or bigger more elaborated (master)pieces et al. affixed to urban public surfaces, usually with a spray can or a marker in a qualitative and/or a quantitative way.

The word “Graffiti” comes from the term “sgraffito”, which was first mentioned by Vasari in 1564 (Vasari, 1945)¹ who referred to a technique of Sgraffito – or scratched patterns on the façades of houses in the Renaissance – related to fresco painting. The word “Graffiti,” a relative of the Italian word for scratching or writing, began to lose its technical meaning around 1850 in favor of its more “unofficial” characteristics, particularly for researchers in the field of ancient history and archeology like Garrucci and the archeologists uncovering ruins in Pompeii (Stahl, 1990).² In the case of these projects, “Graffiti” refers primarily to word-Graffiti. Street Art studies hardly deal with historical or traditional Graffiti and bathroom Graffiti, and when the term Graffiti is used, it generally refers to Style Writing Graffiti.

The books of Johannes Stahl (1989; 1990; 2009) provide a history of traditional graffiti (which is a history of Street Art

as well) until the 1980s, while Jacob Kimvall's "The G-Word" (2014) provides a differentiated discussion of contemporary Style Writing Graffiti not just as art or vandalism.

3. The Term Street Art

Street Art pioneer John Fekner has given a very broad definition of Street Art as: "All art on the street that's not graffiti" (Lewisohn, 2008: 23) or, that is not Style Writing. I agree with him that whatever Street Art is, it is not synonymous with Graffiti, although, as we will see, occasionally the genres do blur. However, not all Street Art is derived from Graffiti Writing.

Street Art was not always called Street Art. Reineke (2007) explains that the term first experienced a breakthrough in the media in 2005. After 2004, the terms "Post-Graffiti" and "Urban Art" competed with one another (along with a slew of other terms) for dominance in English language online forums in which artists and authors engaged in controversial discussions regarding terminology (Reineke, 2007).³ Each of the terms emphasizes different aspects of what we now call Street Art ten years later. "Post-Graffiti" falsely implies that Graffiti is somehow a thing of the past (D-Face, in Reinecke, 2007: 16), whereas Street Art in fact grew out of (Style Writing and other forms of) Graffiti, particularly in light of the supplies and media used and the biographies of Street Artists. Artists like the French Pochoirists around Blek le Rat in the 1980s or punk stenciling are hardly even included in "Post-Graffiti." Such "Stencil-Graffiti" is seen today as both a precursor and a technical sub-type of Street Art because of the popularity of stencils in both the media and among the general public, even though they represent just one method of the reproduction techniques used in Street Art. Unlike Style Writing, Stencil Graffiti is rooted in the context of historical Graffiti, which began in Pompeii and continues today and even includes things like bathroom Graffiti and sayings or quotations in public places, all of which fall into the category of daub scribbling and are categorically removed.

The meaning of Street Art has changed over time. As early as 1975, Robert Sommer used the term Street Art to refer to wall paintings and mural art, however such art projects are in fact legal and "an art form directed towards communicating with masses of inhabitants and passers-by that is planned and approved for exhibition in public spaces" (Derwanz,

2013, p. 112). Besides the fact that such art is legal, this kind of Public Art is not Street Art because it is "contemporary artwork located outside of galleries and museums as an aesthetic and communicative object in order to democratize access to modern art" (Danko, 2009: n.p.). In 1996 an English translation of a Russian book, published in 1984, about early Soviet propaganda (art) is entitled "Street Art of the Revolution: Festivals and Celebrations in Russia 1918-33." Although some Street Art today has roots in propaganda or political posters of 1920s Russia, Fascist 1940s Italy, or/and 1960s France, this 1990s understanding of Street Art differs from the use of the term since 2005. A lot of propaganda pieces were not illegal for instance. In 1985 Allan Schwartzman published a book called "Street Art." Schwartzman's understanding of the term is close to the one used here although he published photos with a mixture of legal and illegal Style Writing Graffiti together with what is called Street Art today.

4. Definition of Street Art

I agree with Peter Bengtsen (2014) that the "term Street Art cannot be defined conclusively since what it encompasses is constantly being negotiated." Thus, the following definition of Street Art is not conclusive but represents a working definition:

Street Art consists of self-authorized pictures, characters, and forms created in or applied to surfaces in the urban space that intentionally seek communication with a larger circle of people. Street Art is done in a performative and often site-specific, ephemeral, and participatory way. Street Art is mostly viewed online. It differs from Graffiti and Public Art.

According to Walde (2006), since 2000 Street Art is a movement.⁴ Before it was just single artists who did what we now retrospectively call Street Art, like Fekner, Zlotykamien, Naegele, Holzer or Basquiat and Haring.

4.1 Street (and) Art

The weakness in my definition, like the weakness inherent in the term Street Art, lies in the portion that falls under "art." According to Hoppe (2009a) Street Art often did not develop out of the field of art, just as it differs from art in form. Because of this, neither Street Art nor Graffiti have to be

categorized as art although Street Art academics like Nora Schmidt (2009) see Street Art as art. When I refer to “drawings and signs of all kinds” (German: Zeichen aller Art) I must consequently, like Siegl (2009), categorize missing pet signs as Street Art or only speak of “self-authorized installation of every sort of artistic drawings and signs.” I am resistant to this because Street Art so often echoes or reflects the optical and/or technical sensibilities of graphic design or illustration more so than so-called fine art. I view Street Art not as an art historian so much as a visual humanities scholar (German: Bildwissenschaftler) who deals with images of all kinds, regardless of their relationship to the problematic label “art.”

Stahl (2009, p. 7) escapes this “Street Art equals art” dilemma by referring back to the photographer, author and artist Brassäi, who, in 1933 labeled scratch-Graffiti, more closely related to the Graffiti in Pompeii that was on the streets of Paris in his time, as “l’art bâtard des rues mal famées” or “bastard art of back streets.” Brassäi’s avant-la-lettre-understanding of Street Art works antithetically. To him, street and art are equally valued opposites, a “mutt” or “mongrel,” as Stahl (2009) puts it. “Street” is not only a qualifier of “art” – in fact it is much more the opposite, as is the case with the term anti-art.

The dialogue between the antonyms “street” and “art” is, overall (although sometimes in a destructive way) constructive. Street Art can refer to everyday phenomena on the “street” that can be perceived as “art,” whether or not they are intended as such. Art is in the eye of the beholder, as was the case with Brassäi (1933) who discovered art on the street and used his eyes (or a camera) to cut these works out of their context and make them into art objects (Wucherer, 1989) that nevertheless preserve the feeling and authenticity of the location. In short – some Street Art is more Street, other Street Art is more Art. In this vein, Kimvall (2014, p.11) speaks of “graffiti vandalism and graffiti art.”

4.2 “Illegal” versus “Self-authorized”

The term “urban space” in my aforementioned definition is analogous to Siegl’s (2009, p. 67) “surfaces belonging to others [...] or under public jurisdiction.” This inherently excludes permitted spaces that belong to Street Artists or spaces where Street Artists are allowed to create works. The

space, the “street” in Street Art, dictates a necessary illegality, at least in Europe or the USA.

Both Graffiti and Street Art are bound together by their characteristic of being “unofficial” (Krause and Heinicke, 2006), “unsolicited” (Siegl, 2009), un-commissioned or “unsanctioned” (Bengtson, 2014) and therefore – from a legal point of view – are often considered to be vandalism. As laws are different from country to country, Street Art may not be illegal everywhere, for instance in China or South America, whereas it may be considered illegal in Europe or the USA.⁵ As “illegal” or “illicit” (which have both moral and legal connotations) are terms that do not apply for all Street Art, “self-authorized” – as per my definition – might be a better term.

The illegality (in most of the Western world) or the “self-authorized nature” of the act of applying artwork is a commentary on capitalism and consumerism in general in that, initially, it cannot function in terms of sales marketing and is therefore autonomous - as opposed to “gallery art”, where artists hope for a sale.⁶ Official Public Art is commissioned, or it was installed either with the consent of the property owner or retrospectively declared legal by the property owner. The narrower or wider understanding of the term “Street Art” is dependent on its further commercial applicability. Those who create (paid) commissioned art quickly encounter the critique that rather than creating art freely and creatively on their own, they are at least in part swayed by the influence of a client or just fulfilling a client’s wish.

Street Art in the narrower sense applies to all art in urban spaces that is not limited by law or by the taste of authorities like sponsors, homeowners, or the state - art that is not directly commercial. This applies to the extent that the artist may not use the work for commercial purposes at all or else risk the accusation from “Street Art purists” that the artist is in the business of self-marketing (though this is always partially the case). In this way, Street Artists (in theory) unplug themselves from the consumer circuit and can deal with an artistic subject without tainting themselves with the stink of double standards: they criticize consumer culture but at the same time, at least indirectly, promote their own artwork, that is, produce “salable” art.⁷ Most Street Art artists sooner or later face the so called “sell-out” conflict: on the one hand they want to live off their art, on the other hand they might betray their anti-consumer principles and lose their

street credibility, that is, their reputation among like-minded people.⁸

Although Siegl (2006) includes legal phenomena in his understanding of Street Art – like pre-approved stickers or legally (commissioned) pictures on walls by Street Artists who otherwise work illegally – I adhere to Krause and Heinicke's (2006), Reineke's (2007), and Derwanz's (2013) refusal of this broad definition of Street Art that includes aspects that contradict the core values of Street Art as unofficial and self-authorized, but not because of the commercial aspect of legal Street Art. Street Art is almost always also a form of self-promotion. Almost all Street Art protagonists are chasing the Style Writing dream of “getting up”, creating a name for themselves and their work and making themselves and their work known, in order to actually make a living, although many may not admit to this (Ephraim Webber, in Reinecke, 2007: 16).

In a Street Art context the term “mural” also often refers to “large, often multi-color, and labor-intensive paintings such as wall, airbrush, and spray can paintings” (Philipps, Herder and Zerr, 2013, in Bengsten, 2014: 131)¹⁰ However, murals are more often sanctioned than not. Baudrillard (1975) already recognized that there are enormous differences between Style Writing and murals. Murals are usually committed to respective communities, they are Public Art while Graffiti and Street Art are more committed to their individual messages, which may stem from a small group or groups but have no official sanction (even when they potentially gain this character over time).¹¹

4.3 Word versus Image

Even if a mural is not sanctioned or commissioned it is less likely to be considered vandalism because it is more easily understood and accessible for the general public than Graffiti Writing. This greater understanding evolves often from the fact that murals and Street Art consist more of images than (unreadable) words.

The following quote about historical Graffiti from Milnor (2014, p. 3) highlights the role of the written word, for these as well as for Style Writing Graffiti: “Certainly, Graffiti can be distinguished from canonical literature in the sense that they are emphatically material, fixed in time and place, and

are thus as much objects as texts.” The material aspect, the solidity, tends toward an understanding of a pictorial object and less so an actual text. Even bathroom Graffiti seeks to communicate or send a message and is therefore technically almost indistinguishable from Street Art. Bathroom Graffiti might often be closer to the “street” than “art”. Stenciled images, murals and other Street Art are usually less cryptic than Style Writing and the stencil has a communicative element of clarity and reproducibility that enables readability.

For Klitzke (2005) Street Art differs from Graffiti in that Graffiti tends more toward written letters while Street Art tends more toward pictorial communication, although both exist on and move within the same continuum between writing and pictures (Klitzke, 2005; Krause and Heinicke, 2006; Lewisohn 2008). Hoppe (2009a) pointed out that paper based Street Art works are even more pictorial than works directly sprayed onto a surface.

In Street Art, the picture often dominates the work rather than the ornamental name writing that characterizes Style Writing. Such Style Writing often communicates with the work of other Style Writers and does not primarily seek to communicate with the general public (Faile, in Lewisohn, 2008: 15) a direct contrast to the aforementioned definition of Street Art: “that intentionally seeks communication with a large circle of people.” Even Street Art that leans heavily on the use of words is more reflective of advertising than Style Writing in that it prioritizes readability for the general public. Baudrillard (1975) sees the political significance of Graffiti (in this case he means Style Writing) in the disruption it causes in the system of signs and written communication in the city through the meaninglessness of its content. The mere fact of the existence of such Style Writing Graffiti provokes questions concerning ownership and property as well as who has the right to communicate what and where (Krause and Heinicke, 2006). This is something else that Street Art and Graffiti have in common.

For Lewisohn (2008) Street Art is less limited by set stylistic rules and by few artistic materials like spray paint and markers than is Style Writing Graffiti. Lewisohn's statement, while exaggeratedly formulated, can be affirmed at least in general, although it is easy to find examples to the contrary both in terms of quality and quantity. These same caveats

apply to another of Lewisohn's theses, namely that Street Art relies more heavily on preparation in a studio rather than the technically difficult and dangerous creation of Style-Writing-handwork on location on the street.

In general, it can be said that Street Art often places more value and emphasis on content and external communication while Style Writing emphasizes technical virtuosity. Equating Street Art with Graffiti or using Graffiti as the catch all term, in the way that Siegl (2009) or Stahl (2009) to a certain extent do, seems to me not to be constructive – although it is forgivable because these two pioneers of Graffiti research not only consider Graffiti to be made up of Style Writing, but also everything else that fits with the category of "Graffiti" as an all-encompassing historical term.

4.4 The Viewer of Street Art

Street Art works speak less to those who often view art, as people on the street generally do not see the urban environment as an outdoor gallery, but rather as scenery on the way from point A to point B. Often they have an unwanted art experience, one that is not controlled like an art experience in a museum. For instance Banksy's early illegal stencils and other Street Art pieces have the goal of bringing a ready-to-understand message to a passerby-viewer (Blanché 2012). Since the breakthrough of the internet most viewers of Street Art experience it online. Since then Street Art is not mainly made for the street, i.e. to be an eye-catcher there, but to look best on photos or videos for online viewers.

Most Street Art is not for everyone even though it seems to be. In theory it might be for everyone. Most Street Artists attach their work in areas where people expect Street Art, usually the gentrified parts of the city, for example in London, New York or Berlin. Those areas that might need Street Art, the rather poor and the rather rich residential areas are often free of Street Art. Also on the internet it can be easy to miss Street Art photos without purposely seeking them out. Most passers-by on the street do not recognize Street Art if it is not a big mural that is in your face. For them, Street Art and Graffiti are often forms of visual noise that they ignore. Even most people who seek out Street Art online a lot tend to overlook Street Art on the street, as they may not be trained to see it.

4.5 Street Art Is Site-specific

Another definition of Street Art is by the philosopher Nicholas Riggle (2010: 246): "An artwork is Street Art if, and only if, its material use of the street is internal to its meaning." The problem with Riggle's definition is, as Bengtsen (2014, p. 132) pointed out, that: "[i]t remains unclear, however, who is to judge whether the use of the street is indeed essential to the meaning of a specific artwork." The context of each Street Artwork, that is, "its material use of the street" changes during its life period on the street in a palimpsest way. The site-specificity of Street Art is part of Riggle's definition and was pointed out earlier, for instance by Lewisohn (2008), Waclawek (2008), and Hoppe (2009a). Not all Street Art is site-specific in the same way. Some is perfectly tailored to its place, while others could be placed anywhere on the street – like a poster. There are different degrees of site-specificity of a Street Art work and the degree and quality of site-specificity can change during the shelf life of the street piece because Street Art is ephemeral and participatory (see section 4.7). A Street piece can refer to a certain wall, but also to a certain area, street, city, country or all of these at once.¹²

4.6 The Performative Aspect of Street Art

Derwanz (2013) draws attention to the performative aspect of (legal) mural painting or pavement art, which she does not attribute to Street Art. Although it is very rare to see the "performance" itself – or the actual often spectacular application of Street Art content – like Waclawek (2008) I see a clear performative element integrated in every work of Street Art. The visual "short and to the point message, often marked by unexpected combinations [...] [of Street Art, note UB] convey visual quality created at break-neck speed" (Beck, 2003, p. 5) dictate their creation., inBanksy's words:

Graffiti is an art form where the gesture is at least as important as the result, if not more so. I read how a critic described Jackson Pollock as a performance artist who happened to use paint, and the same could be said for Graffiti writers – performance artists who happen to use paint. And trespass (Hamilton, 2013: n.p.).

Street Art is usually not a performance according to the usual meaning of the term. In general, a performer performs in front of an audience. But these works frequently carry the

information that “something happened” on this particular spot. This something is very often the illegal attachment of a piece of Street Art to a surface in a public space. Its adventurous, cheeky, bold attachment is part of the artwork:

A significant/decisive epistemological change in art occurred in the 20th century. This change is not so much that actions take the place of objects but much more so that real objects and real actions take the place of their representations/replace the mere representation thereof. This is only made possible through the fact that these real objects and actions are, for the first time, recognized/seen/perceived as both serious and necessary elements of artistic presentation (Pfaller, 2012, p. 192).

Banksy’s art still relies on representing objects, but real objects on the street or in a museum become props in his work without losing their original purpose. They are both still an electric cable on a wall, or a functioning telephone box, but also part of a temporary artwork. His appropriation of street-furniture on the street or in an art venue often does not destroy them but rather re-labels them.

From “classical” performance Street Artists adopted the importance of time – the spectators can see in what short time they made this work without getting caught – also the transience of ephemeral Street Art and the importance of space. Banksy’s art is, like many performances, tailored for a certain location and loses its original condition when transferred elsewhere. Like many performance artists, Street Artists also sell documentations, prints, DVDs, and books of their Street Art in an ironic way as “souvenirs” or relicts. Street Art, like performance art, is a kind of process-based art; each work of Street Art is imprinted with traces of the process. As per se non-sellable forms of art, performance art and Street Art are consumer critical art forms – both criticize the role of an art object as a consumer product.

Both the performance aspect and the aforementioned pointed site-specificity grow organically from the spatial situation, the location, or the birthplace of creation – the “street” in Street Art. The various forms of Graffiti also contain this performative element. It grows from the relationship with the location in which it is created, the value – that is, how bodily or legally dangerous or risky the placement is. This differs

from the location in the sense that Lewisohn (2008: 63) invokes when he says, “[g]raffiti is such a stubborn genre that it refuses to take on any of the conditions of its placement.”

4.7 Street Art Is Ephemeral and Participatory

Street Art is often participatory. That is, anyone can paint over it, destroy it, add something to it, or complete it. Other Graffiti Writers or Street Artists, homeowners, and the council are the usual suspects to change and remove Street Art; but the general public, the passers-by can also become active participants with a piece of Street Art. Street Art is inherently non-commissioned, so it is already outlawed and can be altered. Billboards and Public Art are commissioned and usually meant to remain untouched/unaltered.¹³ Style Writing has strict rules about who is allowed to alter pieces of other Style Writers. Some Street Artists encourage interaction with other players on the street, while some make their work as hard to alter and destroy as possible, for instance by using firm material like the tiles of French Street Artist Space Invader, or New York based former Street Artist Darius Jones’ metal street sculptures. This is a counter reaction as most of this kind of participation is destructive.

However, there is another type of non-destructive participation, especially in Street Art that is connected to the role of photography. A lot of recent street pieces leave blank space in the artwork where people have the opportunity to pose with the artwork, e.g. for photos and selfies.

Most Street Art is ephemeral, i.e. temporary. Wind and weather, sun and rain destroy most unprotected Street Art. The shelf life of a Street Art or Graffiti piece varies, but after a few hours, months, or years, it reaches the end of its existence. Photography can serve to document the process of change over time for a piece of Street Art, a process that is encouraged by many Street Artists.

Street Artists also use a different site specific aspect involving participation, the role of (digital) photography and the role of the viewer of Street Art both online and on the Street. With their smartphones, the online viewer of Street Art merges with the one on the street as Banksy for instance geotagged photos of his recent work on Instagram so people can go there and take a photo or just have a look. Street Artists are often interested in involving the viewers in their Street Art through a kind of scavenger hunt. This is the logical conse-

quence of Banksy including detailed advice how to attach stencils in the street in his early days on his website, in his books, or in magazines with Banksy-interviews. He does not just want the audience to watch him perform; he wants them to join him in the game of Street Art.

5. Urban Art

The term Urban Art is broader than Street Art and also includes legal works. Urban Art seemed more appropriate as an umbrella term for any art in the style of Street Art, Style Writing or mural art. Urban Art was and is often a synonym for Street Art. The auction house Bonhams called their sale of works by Street Artists or artists who often work on the street "Urban Art." Urban Art is art that is often performed by Street Artists for the purpose of earning a living, frequently with recycled motifs or techniques of their Street Art pieces without illegality or self-authorization – and often without the site-specific aspect.

However, if Urban Artists attach illegal works on the street, they become Street Artists and graffiti writers (again). In contrast to the majority of Public Art or art in public space, Urban Art refers stylistically to Street Art and graffiti Style Writing, that banks on the street credibility of Street Art without being illegal or un-commissioned and without relying on the often unadventurous appearance of "sanctioned" community mural art. Unlike Public Art, Urban Art can be in a museum or gallery – that is, it can be sold commercially as well. Dis-mounted from the street, works of Street Art become Urban Art. Unlike Street Art or Land Art, the majority of Urban Art focuses less on the mounting location and the urban environment. Urban Art is very often gallery art in the visual style of Street Art.

6. Further considerations

Lewisohn (2008) is not completely wrong in his claims regarding Street Art scholarship. I would not agree with his charge that most research about Street Art is written by fans – in other words, without critical distance – but the majority of the papers given at Street Art conferences are rather descriptive. Most can be summarized as, "there is this Street Art project in such-and-such and I will give you some more details about that" – and that's it. What is often missing is a theoretical discussion.

As a researcher in visual culture (in German: Bildwissen-

schaftler) I often miss in academic Street Art research a debate and an examination of what it is that we are seeing. A lot of researchers simply deal with the frame-set of Street Art – i.e., Street Artists combined with background information about shows. Some researchers show many visual examples of Street Art, and leave you alone with these – as if the pictures could speak for themselves. Well, in a sense they do, but they speak with everyone differently. A lot of researchers have spoken with Street Artists, graffiti writers, and new media practitioners, but not with Street Art itself. Interviews are not always the solution. Most Street Artists who say that their art is great might be wrong – as indeed might be the case if they say the opposite. "Anything-goes" might be fruitful for Street Art but not for Street Art research: some carefully defined working categories might be helpful. I plead for more Street Art research and less research about Street Artists, although one cannot be without the other.

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Notes

1 - "Questo e i lavoro ehe per esser da! ferro graffiato hanno chiamato i pittori sgraffito," according to Giorgio Vasari: *Le vite dei piu eccellenti Pittori, Scultori e Architetti*. Carlo L. Ragghianti (Ed.). Milano 1945: 375: Libro I, Capitolo XXVI; *Degli Sgraffiti delle case ehe reggono all'acqua, quello ehe si adoperi a farli, e come si lavorine Je grottesehe ne Ue mure*.

2 - According to Johannes Stahl: *Graffiti: Zwischen Alltag und Ästhetik*. Munich 1990: 5. He refers to W.P. McLeans' definition of graffiti in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*. Paris (1968) vol. 7, 1970: 850.

3 - Reinecke (2007) and Wacławek (2008) obviously preferred the term Post-Graffiti but changed their titles and terms to "Street Art" as this term became more familiar in the media.

4 - I have discussed the reasons for this elsewhere (Blanché 2012).

5 - Here further research is needed.

6 - At least, not in the short run. Not only in the cases of Banksy and Shepard Fairey - their works on the street lead to the fact their prints and books sold.

7 - See previous footnote. In the case of Bristol and London Street Art this, to a certain extent, boosts tourism.

8 - The first sell out allegations against Banksy appeared as early as 2003 (Beale, 2004).

9 - Axel Philipps, Eelco Herder and Sergej Zerr (2013) include graffiti pieces and legal works done by Street Artists in an unpublished paper ("The recognition and dissemination of Street Art with Flickr. A visual content analysis") quoted by Bengtsen (2014: 131; 210).

10 - Like Banksy's selected work in Bristol in 2007, Mild Mild West, which has become a landmark in the world of alternative art (BBC, 2014).

11 - I have discussed this elsewhere (Blanché 2012).

12 - For the difference between Street and Public Art see Hoppe (2009b) and Danko (2009). See also Bengtsen (2014).

Towards the scholarly documentation of street art

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Abstract

It is generally acknowledged that street art is a particularly ephemeral art. For instance, graffiti are usually actively removed, thus existing for sometimes only a few days. Otherwise, they deteriorate gradually due to the effects of the weather, or are eventually 'crossed' by other graffiti, so that they are visible for a few years at best. Therefore, the documentation of street art should be of paramount importance to researchers. In fact, a lot of photography is being carried out ostensibly to document street art, for both image databases on the Internet as well as printed books and magazines. However, for the most part, this kind of street art photography is not done by (or for) scholars but rather by (and for) the general public. In any case, this practice usually does not fulfill even the lowest scholarly standards of documentation. One can be considered lucky to find any metadata for such pictures – for example, the artist's name, an approximate location (usually on a city or district level), or the date on which the picture was taken, if at all. Furthermore, the selection of photographed works is highly biased due to the personal tastes of the photographers or the accessibility of the work. In order for street art documentation to be useful for research, providing further data is necessary, such as a more precise location, references to other instances of the same work, and the dimensions of the work. In this article, the current inadequate state of documentation in street art research is surveyed, and a model for the online documentation of stencil graffiti is presented that demonstrates the feasibility of some of these requirements.

Keywords: Disciplinarity, Documentation, Metadata, Object-based research, Referencing; Standardization.

1. Where is the art in street art studies?

The last few years have seen a considerable increase in scholarly publication activity related to street art and graffiti – a trend exemplified by the foundation of this very journal.¹ If, however, one looks at Street Art Studies as a possible scholarly field or discipline of its own, it remains elusive, or at least heterogeneous. For reasons that will become clear later in this article, one question in this context is of particular relevance: can Street Art Studies be counted among the object-based Humanities, such as Art History and Archaeology (Krause and Reiche, 2013)?

The vast majority of scholarly texts on graffiti and street art seem to be concerned with people rather than objects. Gregory Snyder's (2009: 9-10) aim, for instance, was to "place people before theory" and to "distinguish between the graffiti pieces and the people who create them." Likewise, Julia Reinecke (2012: 177-181) analyses street art as a

"field" in Pierre Bourdieu's sense, and portrays its "actors." Even art historian Anna Waclawek (2011: 159) has reservations against works of graffiti and street art as objects, and depreciates them when she says, "because the objects that typify these art practices are not singular and because they are 'free', they also fall within the realm of popular art and street culture." This leads Waclawek to take a "visual culture studies" approach that is "concerned with contemporary, everyday experiences of visual consumption." The dominant methods and approaches in Street Art Studies seem to stem from fields such as anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and ethnography, all of which tend to place people before objects, or, in our case, street artists before street art.

And yet, most scholarly authors use the term 'street art' in their publication titles, and not 'street artists'. Street artists are defined first and foremost by the works they have created, not so much by the process of creating them: even though the thrill of working illegally at the risk of get-

ting caught and facing legal consequences is an appeal for many artists (see Snyder, 2009: 9), all authors agree that the main purpose of street art is to communicate – be it communication within the graffiti community, territorial markings, or the conveyance of socio-political messages to the general public (Cowick, 2015). Despite the ephemerality of their artworks, it is through these artworks (or their photographic reproductions) long after their creation, rather than through the act of creation, that street artists communicate (Brown, 2015). This justifies paying closer attention to the works created by street artists, even within individual studies that focus on the artists themselves.

2. Treatment of artworks in object-based scholarly texts

If we assume, then, that Street Art Studies is an object-based scholarly discipline, how should objects in an object-based discipline ideally be dealt with? Let us consider a randomly

selected example from an article in a recent issue of *Art History* (O'Neill, 2015: 115), a major journal in the eponymous field. The text refers to a painting reproduced as Plate 5 in that article:

The painting depicts the liberation of a male figure imprisoned alongside a knight and a priest [...]. The figure of Freedom in that painting [...] bursts into the cell, lit from behind by dazzling sunlight. The upwards thrust of the canvas, in concert with the limited span of the angel's iridescent wings, conveys the claustrophobia of the prison cell while simultaneously revealing the awesome power of the liberator.

The caption of plate 5 reads:

“Plate 5. Walter Crane, *Freedom*, 1885. Oil on canvas, 182 × 122 cm. Private Collection. Photo: Sotheby's Picture Library.”

Intriguingly, Crane first used this figure in a painting of the same year entitled *Freedom* (plate 5), shown at the Grosvenor Gallery summer exhibition of contemporary art in 1885. The painting depicts the liberation of a male figure imprisoned alongside a knight and a priest, the pictorial equivalent to the 'religious hypocrisy' and 'party politics' emblazoned on the vampire's wings in the cartoon. The figure of Freedom in that painting resembles the one evoked in the first verse of Crane's poem, 'that spread her stainless wings and sheltering nurst, / From out of all lands, the hunted and oppressed'. She bursts into the cell, lit from behind by dazzling sunlight. The upwards thrust of the canvas, in concert with the limited span of the angel's iridescent wings, conveys the claustrophobia of the prison cell while simultaneously revealing the awesome power of the liberator.



Plate 5. Walter Crane, *Freedom*, 1885. Oil on canvas, 182 × 122 cm. Private Collection.

Photo: Sotheby's Picture Library.

Figure 1. Screenshot from the online version of O'Neill (2015)

No less than eight pieces of information about this artwork, or metadata, are provided here: artist, title, year of creation, technique or material, dimensions, location, a brief description of the content and composition, and, last but not least, a photographic reproduction (plus photography credit). What may appear to be an abundance of metadata is in fact necessary information if we consider its purpose. Intuitively, four different purposes of artwork metadata come to mind:

- to help the reader get a better idea of what the work looks like;
- to help the reader physically locate the work;

- to distinguish it from other similar works;
- to act as a substitute for lost works (Prochno, 1999: 92).

The photographic reproduction is the most important of these pieces of metadata, but on its own its explanatory power is limited, as it is hard to tell from a photograph how large the artwork is, with which technique it was produced, where it is located, etc. Therefore, it is standard practice in traditional object-based disciplines such as art history to provide a set of textual metadata in addition to a pictorial representation when discussing an artwork.

3. Treatment of artworks in scholarly texts on street art

In contrast, Street Art Studies deal with their objects in quite a different way. Let us consider two examples from recent scholarly works that are indicative of Street Art Studies as a whole. Julia Reinecke's book "Street-Art. Eine Subkultur zwischen Kunst und Kommerz" ("street art, a subculture between art and commerce") first came out in 2007 and was the first scholarly German-language monograph on street art. The following refers to its second edition (2012). Page

51 is typical of how Reinecke writes about works of street art and of how she relates images to words: In a chapter on Blek Le Rat, three figures are included, with the following captions:

Abbildung [i.e. figure] 7: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Old Irish Man Screaming. Paris 1983

Abbildung 8: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Tom Waits. Paris 1984

Abbildung 9: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Old Irish Man. Paris 1983

Nachdem Blek Le Rat in den letzten Jahren mit den Ratten, Panzern, Portraits und anderen Schablonen, die in unterschiedlichen Städten auftauchten, bereits die Neugierde der französischen Bevölkerung geweckt hatte, gelang Prou mit dem riesigen Schablonenbild des Mannes der Durchbruch. Das *Pochoir* war im Gespräch: Der alte nordirische Mann kursierte unter den Namen Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin und schlicht »der Alte«. Mit seiner sich stetig perfektionierenden Technik stellte Prou daraufhin Tom Waits, einen kleinen Jungen in kurzer Hose, Andy Warhol, Marcel Dessault, eine Frau mit Kind, einen russischen Soldaten, Mitterand, Joseph Beuys, Christus und etwa vierzig andere Gestalten her.



Abbildung 7: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Old Irish Man Screaming. Paris 1983

Abbildung 8: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Tom Waits. Paris 1984

Abbildung 9: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Old Irish Man. Paris 1983

Figure 2. Part of page 51 from Reinecke (2012)

The corresponding text passage on the same page reads:

After Blek Le Rat piqued the curiosity of the French public with rats, tanks, portraits and other stencils which appeared in various cities, [Xavier] Prou [a.k.a. Blek Le Rat] made his breakthrough with the huge stencil image of a man. The pochoir became talk of the town: the old Northern Irish man went by the names of Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin and

simply 'the old guy'. With his steadily improving technique, Prou went on to produce Tom Waits, a little boy in short trousers, Andy Warhol, Marcel Dessault [sic; i.e. Dassault], a woman with child, a Russian soldier, Mitterand, Joseph Beuys, Christ, and approximately forty more figures (my translation).

Both Reinecke's captions and the text passage referring

to the images are markedly different from those in Morna O'Neill's art historical article on Walter Crane. In Reinecke's captions, the artist's name, a title (although the source of the title is unclear), only a vague location, and a year (the year of production or the year in which the photograph was taken?) are given. In comparison to O'Neill's article, the technique and the dimensions are missing. While it can be easily and safely assumed that the pictures were made using spray paint and stencils, we cannot tell from the photographs how large they are. Reinecke says the "Old Irish Man" is "huge" ("riesig"), but what does this mean precisely? Huge for a man (i.e., more than life size) or huge for a regular stencil graffiti piece, which could mean as little as 100 × 50 cm? On the same page, Reinecke says Blek Le Rat created his first life-sized stencil portrait of a man in 1984, but it is unclear whether she means "Old Irish Man" or another piece. Indicating the height and width of an artwork, even if given only roughly or estimated, is crucial when this cannot be inferred from the photograph provided. For instance, knowing the dimensions is important for reception research, for example, when investigating how the relation between the size of painted figures and the size of beholders influences their perception. With other works of street art, measurements can be important because different sizes give clues about different techniques that might have been used, for example, stencils for intricate details in small works, or paint rollers for large ones.

The quoted text passage is also different from O'Neill's in that Reinecke does not actually describe the pictured artworks, except for the vague statement about the size of "Old Irish Man" and brief remarks about its reception. On the other hand, Reinecke lists many more works in this text passage without picturing them. Clearly, this low level of detail is not enough to fulfill the purposes of artwork metadata outlined in section 2 above:

- a. due to the lack of measurements and the small size of the photographic reproduction, the reader does not get a good idea of what the work looks like in real life.
- b. The given location, "Paris", is not precise enough to let the reader find the work. The exact location of an artwork is important though, for several reasons. First of all, to see the original work is still the preferred way for any researcher (except for those following 'big data' or statistical approaches) to start his or her investigation. Photographs and textual data cannot replace the actual encounter with the original work.

Street addresses or geographic coordinates allow researchers other than the one who undertook the documentation to find the artwork and see it with their own eyes, unless it has been removed by the time they get there. Even if all that is left is an empty wall, being at the actual place where the artwork once has been provides insights: Is this wall in a lively street or on a deserted site? Did many people get to see the artwork? Did the artist have to hurry when he painted it? Are there other street art pieces, or other objects, near the artwork that it perhaps reacted to? These are all questions usually not answered by the photographs used to document the artworks, so the indication of their exact location is essential.

c. The reader will not be able to distinguish this work from similar ones: Reinecke pictures two variants of "Old Irish Man", but does not explain which of the varying details (speech bubble, signature, placement of bottle) constitute the variant, and whether there are more variants. Even if there were no variants, it may be important to determine the exact instance of a stencil graffiti piece due to its site specificity (Riggle, 2010; Waclawek, 2011: 133-139; 178; Brown, 2015).

- d. Because of the lack of measurements, the small size of the reproduced photograph in combination with the lack of a verbal description, and the general scarcity of metadata, Reinecke's information on the "Old Irish Man" would be a poor substitute for the actual work.

How problematic Reinecke's treatment of artworks can be becomes obvious later in her book when she discusses Banksy and his stencil graffiti pieces on the West Bank wall (Reinecke, 2012: 66-67). She speaks of nine different works, pictures two of them and briefly describes two works in the text. One of them is described like this: "one motif shows an opening through which blue sky is shining as if it came from the back of the wall. Next to it there is a stencil-sprayed boy holding a brush and paint bucket, as if he had painted the hole" (my translation). The problem here is that it is unclear which of Banksy's West Bank wall pieces Reinecke is referring to. One of the two pictured works shows a painted hole in the wall, but there are two children below it, not one next to it, and in the picture within the hole we see more sand and palm trees than blue sky. The second work described by Reinecke here is, "a white ladder leading up to the edge of the wall. At the bottom of the wall, Banksy painted the boy again" (my translation). In fact, there seem to be three of Banksy's West Bank works that depict similar-

looking boys. The figures of the children in these three works are made from apparently only two different stencils. One of these pictures is probably the one meant by Reinecke, as it contains blue sky and a child, but the child is not the same as in the ladder piece, and the objects in its hand are more likely a spade and sand bucket (Waclawek, 2011: 147) in order to invoke a beach scene, rather than a brush and paint bucket.² It looks as if Reinecke either mixed up several of the West Bank pieces, or simply did not pay close attention to their details; at any rate it betrays a superficial treatment of the artworks.

As a second example, let us consider Anna Waclawek's book "Graffiti and Street Art" (2011), the first

street art monograph written by an art historian. A typical caption in this book looks like this:

[Fig.] 29 (above) Roadsworth, *Male Plug*, Baie-Saint-Paul, Canada, 2007. A road is an integral constituent in the organization of a city but one that is typically devoid of artistic expression. Roadsworth seamlessly works his stencils into existing road markings to intervene within the regimented urban vocabulary and transform utilitarian symbols into new avenues of meaning (Waclawek 2011: 35; bold and italics by A. W.).

In other captions, a title is often missing, as is the location

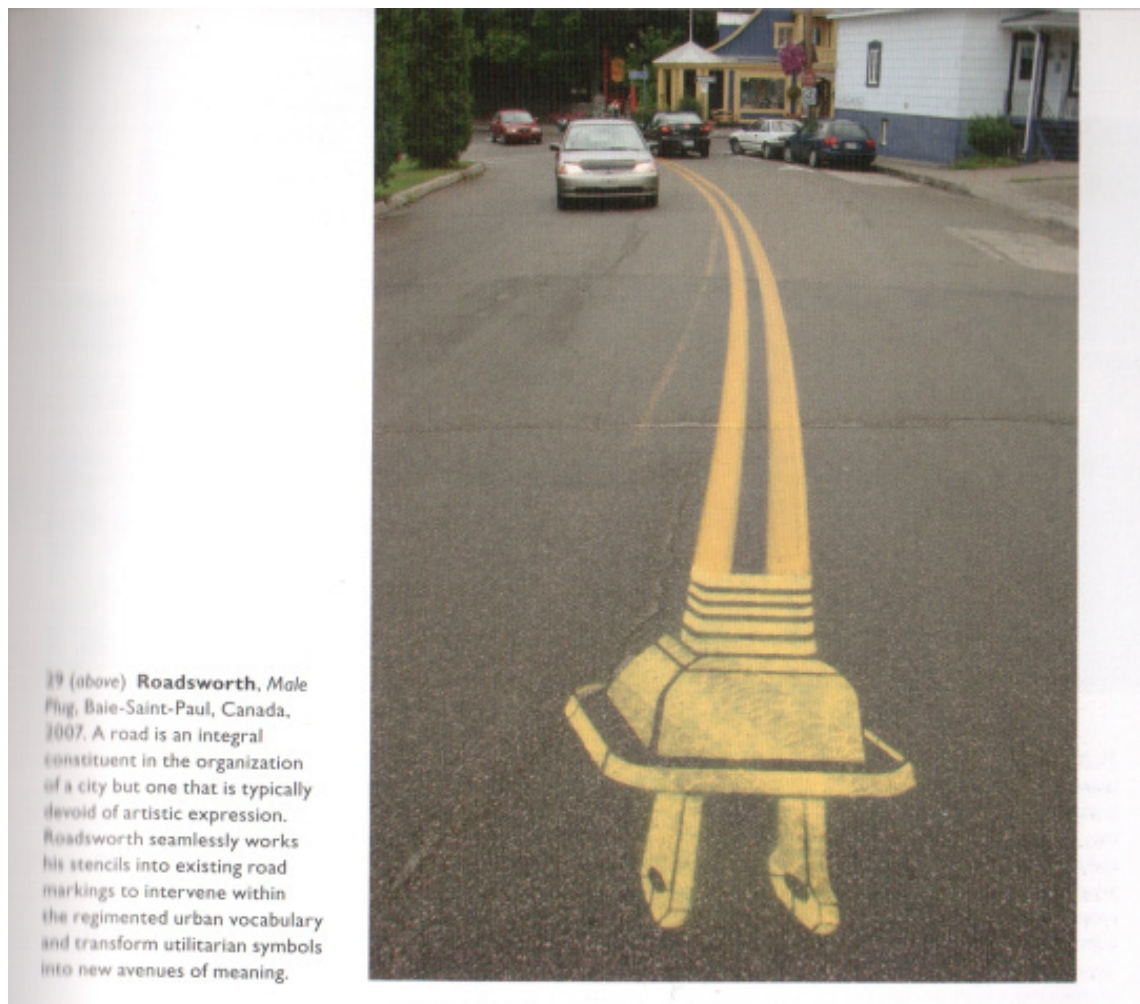


Figure 3. Part of page 35 from Waclawek (2011)

and sometimes the year. The text passage referring to this figure reads:

Working with a very different spatial and visual aesthetic [than Banksy], in 2001 Roadsworth initiated a series of stencilled images on the roads of Montreal. The integration of his paintings with official city infrastructure offers a unique opportunity for a dialogue between citizens and the structure of the city. By painting on roads, the artist not only appropriates a non-traditional surface for art diffusion, but also intervenes in a highly structured, functional and systematized formal vocabulary [29] (Waclawek, 2011: 34; plate number in square brackets by A. W.).

The deficiencies in Waclawek's metadata are largely the same as in Reinecke's book – lack of dimensions, imprecise location, unclear source of title and year – and the

corresponding text passage is similar in that it does not refer to the pictured work itself, but rather to a series of works that the pictured work is part of. However, whether the pictured "Male Plug" is really part of the series mentioned in the text is unclear: the text passage reads as if Roadsworth's series was confined to Montreal, but the location of "Male Plug" is given as Baie-Saint-Paul, which is far away from Montreal.

In contrast to Reinecke and most other street art authors, Waclawek offers actual formal descriptions of graffiti pieces, albeit few and brief, such as in this caption:

[Fig.] 41 Does, Bondi Beach, Sydney, Australia, 2010. This expertly executed piece by Dutch writer Does both exhibits classic graffiti symbols, such as stars, crowns, arrows and hearts, and incredible fluidity. The painted reflection adds to the seamless flow of the letters, masterful blending and crispness (Waclawek, 2011: 46; bold by A. W.).

41 Does, Bondi Beach, Sydney, Australia, 2010. This expertly executed piece by Dutch writer Does both exhibits classic graffiti symbols, such as stars, crowns, arrows and hearts, and incredible fluidity. The painted reflection adds to the seamless flow of the letters, masterful blending and crispness.

... by modeling the letters – giving them a sense of three-dimensionality – writers allow the piece figuratively to move. In the creation of a piece, writers are not only painting their name in a reformulated alphabet but are also careful to include elements that support, highlight, frame and aestheticize their letters. To this end, backgrounds are painted and characters or symbols, which sometimes stand in for letters, are added. When critiquing a piece, writers focus on the flow of letters, the design's originality, the method of paint application, the



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Figure 4. Part of page 46 from Waclawek (2011)

On the other hand, Waclawek (as well as Reinecke) is guilty of sometimes writing about artworks without picturing them (e.g. p. 47), and picturing artworks without writing about them (e.g. p. 97) – a mistake most first-year students of art history are taught to avoid (Prochno 1999: 102-109).

This superficial treatment of artworks in Street Art Studies may be due to two reasons: the scholars' attitude, and the lack of data. As outlined in section 1 above, the problem with the attitude of the majority of street art scholars is that they see street art not primarily as an art form, but as a movement, a subculture, or a group of people. This leads them to neglect the analysis of artworks as a research method, even though it is the artworks themselves, more often than not, which form the base of their arguments. Julia Reinecke's book, for instance, makes a point of how street art can be commercialized, and she mentions Mysterious Al's backpack designs for Eastpak and advertisement design for Carhartt as evidence (Reinecke, 2012: 114) without giving any information about them, let alone trying to convey what they look like.

The second reason for not providing information on works of street art is that this kind of information is not as easy to look up as, for example, information on oil paintings by famous artists such as Walter Crane. When art historians need to find out the measurements of a painting, even if they stand before it in a gallery, they hardly ever use a ruler. Instead, this, and many other pieces of information, is usually looked up in previous publications on that work, including but not limited to catalogues raisonnés and collection inventories. For street art, few resources containing such data exist. Unfortunately, not many street art scholars appear to make the effort to carry out the fundamental research involved in documenting artworks and establishing their basic metadata. Furthermore, notions of what it means to document street art and how to properly do it vary from scholar to scholar.

4. Documenting street art

In 2008, Rachel Masilamani published an article on "Documenting Illegal Art", more precisely "New York City's 1970s and 1980s Graffiti Art Movement," in which she states:

The rising numbers of image-laden graffiti art books published in the past decade indicate that communities outside

of traditional repositories recognize the need to document this elusive yet universal form [i.e. graffiti]. It is incumbent upon archivists and curators to recognize the need to acquire and preserve artifacts and records related to this movement and develop an awareness of its history and major players (Masilamani, 2008: 4).

In other words, the photographic documentation of graffiti is seemingly appearing by itself, without the need for professional archivists to do anything. What is left for archivists to do is to collect items related to graffiti culture, such as black books and records of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Later in the article, Masilamani (2008: 12) concedes to scholars and archivists the task of collaboratively gathering and editing metadata, including metadata for graffiti photographs: "A collaborative software-supported record for a photograph of a throw-up may include information about the date, writer, photographer, donor, location, color, style, etc., without being physically included with any particular collection [...]." However, Masilamani does not propose a standard metadata set for such records.

In a book chapter from 2015, Brian Brown also embraces photography as a means of documentation and preservation. According to Brown, though, it is the street artists themselves who disseminate their work via digital photographs on the Internet: "The archival qualities of the online environment compensate for the inherent ephemerality of the physical works." Consequently,

the object that more faithfully represents the intentions and/or vision of the artist is not the physical work itself, removed from its original context or extracted from the broader urban canvas that is elemental to its composition, but the digital representation thereof that captures this contextual urban canvas and the intentions of the artist more faithfully than the tattered remnants housed in a gallery (Brown, 2015: 283).

This view is problematic: not only does the artwork undergo a fundamental transformation when digitized – the original (e.g. spray-painted) artwork and the digital photography are two different kinds of object – but also the photograph made by an artist (or passerby) is quite different from a photograph made by a scholar with the aim to document a work of art, including the metadata and accompanying text.

Similarly, Carmen Cowick (2015) suggested that,

“the easiest way to address the ephemeral nature [of street art] is regular photography of neighborhoods and areas known for their street art. This does not need to be done solely by the archivist or librarian; it can be a crowdsourcing effort involving all interested parties.” Crowdsourcing, however, is unlikely to yield metadata in sufficient quality, depth, and extent. This is evident in online database efforts such as Google’s recently launched Street Art Project (<https://streetart.withgoogle.com>; see also Riefe, 2015). Different institutions have contributed data to this resource, which makes it very heterogeneous – some records provide measurements, some do not, for instance - and the featured artworks are selected by varying and often arbitrary criteria of relevance, rather than transparent scholarly standards. Instead, a scholarly information resource should strive for

complete coverage, so that users know what they can expect to find. This coverage needs to be explicitly defined and could encompass the oeuvre of a single artist like a catalogue raisonné, or all works within a defined spatial area, not unlike a museum catalogue. Online resources similar to Google Street Art Project spring up (and perish) continuously, e.g. Global Street Art (<http://globalstreetart.com>) from the UK, or Streetart Finder (<http://www.streetartfinder.de>) from Germany. Another interesting website is Graffiti Archaeology (<http://grafarc.org>) from the US, which provides detailed temporal data, but (deliberately – see Curtis, 2011) lacks any spatial data. These Internet resources all suffer from the same problems, due to their largely crowdsourced content: fragmentary or at least heterogeneous metadata, and erratic or arbitrary coverage.

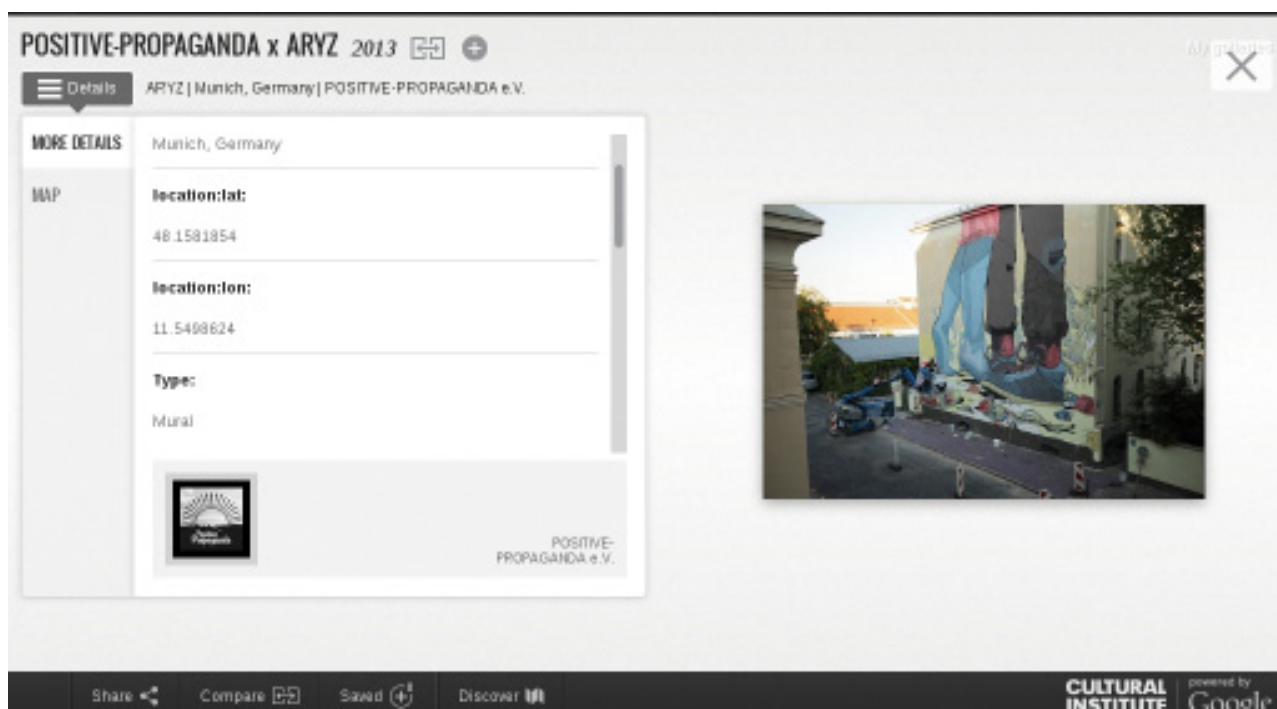


Figure 5. Screenshot of a record view in Google Street Art Project. Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google Inc., used with permission

5. Creating a street art metadata resource

For the reasons outlined above in section 4, I maintain that it is up to the researcher to gather metadata (this will usually include taking photographs) for works of street art, which of course does not preclude the sharing and re-use of such data. For measuring graffiti pieces, a straightforward meth-

odology has already been suggested by David Novak (2014). This and other aspects of metadata creation need to be (further) discussed within Street Art Studies in order to establish standard methodologies and metadata sets, which can serve as points of orientation for scholars producing metadata and authors referring to artworks alike. Street art encompasses a wide variety of media, so it might make sense to approach

each medium separately, as there are different metadata requirements for each, for example, graffiti pieces, three-dimensional installations, or mass-produced stickers, etc.

As proof of concept, I have created the online resource “Schablonengraffiti in Freiburg-Mittelwiehre” (<http://graffiti.freiburg.bplaced.net/>, in German). The scope of this street art data collection is limited to the medium of stencil graffiti, and confined to one particular city district of Freiburg, Germany. Under these typological and spatial criteria, it aims to be complete. Since its inception in 2007, the collection is continuously updated and contains more than 200 records to date. Each record consists of two photographs – one close-up shot of the artwork and one wide shot that includes part of the surrounding location (each in two different resolutions) – and a set of metadata: location (street address), measure-

ments (height by width, rounded to half centimetres), date on which the photograph was taken, and, if applicable, the date on which the work was found to be removed or destroyed, and finally references to other records with pieces likely made from the same stencil.³ Part of this data set is also provided in the machine-readable RDFa format (Herman et al., 2013), in order to comply with Linked Open Data standards (Berners-Lee, 2009) so that others can aggregate and analyse the data across multiple sources.

Of course, it is unlikely that a street art researcher working on, for example, a particular street artist will find relevant data on the “Schablonengraffiti in Freiburg-Mittelwiehre” website. However, imagine all street art scholars putting together and making available, or at least contributing to, similar resources. Measured against the totality of street

SCHABLONENGRAFFITI IN FREIBURG-MITTELWIEHRE

- [Startseite](#)
- [Außerhalb der Mittelwiehre](#)
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254		253		249	
					
Umgebungsfoto klein groß		Umgebungsfoto klein groß		Umgebungsfoto klein groß	
Ort: Ecke Talstr./Hildastr.		Ort: Ecke Talstr./Hildastr.		Ort: Dreisamferweg am Mariensteg	
Motivgröße (HxB): 25,5 × 21 cm		Motivgröße (HxB): 21,5 × 17 cm		Motivgröße (HxB): 22 × 23 cm	
Foto: 30.11.2014		Foto: 30.11.2014		Siehe auch: 224	
				Foto: 19.10.2014	
248		245		244	
					

Figure 6. Screenshot of “Schablonengraffiti in Freiburg-Mittelwiehre”.

art worldwide, the coverage would still be incomplete – it always will be, given the continuing prosperity of street art production and the humble extent of Street Art Studies – but at least there would be some sound scholarly data that other researchers could rely on. In turn, the availability of data might inspire street art scholars to engage more closely with individual artworks, so that a culture of proper referencing of artworks may develop. For as long as we are imprecise about the artworks we are discussing, our research will be rightfully seen as lacking scholarly rigor.

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Notes

1 - While many authors make a point of distinguishing street art from graffiti (see above all Riggle, 2010, but also Reinecke, 2012: 21-49, and Waclawek 2011: 29-30), I mostly use the terms interchangeably in this article.

2 - A photograph of this work can be seen at: <http://www.theguardian.com/arts/pictures/image/0,8543,-10105256016,00.html>.

3 - Some works of street art are unique and irreproducible, whereas others, such as most stencil graffiti, but also marker tags, are intended to be produced in multiple copies with little or no variation. For research, this information is important: if an artwork cannot be found anymore at the site where it was photographed, maybe there is another instance of the same motif at another location where it can still be seen. Furthermore, the spatial distribution of copies may give an idea about the 'territories' of artists, and about the people who might have seen the artwork.

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Methodologies for Reconstructing New Landscapes of Consumption and Production

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Abstract

This working paper outlines a new methodology, actionable theory, for critically investigating the ‘public’ spaces produced within large-scale luxury developments in New York City. Actionable theory offers different means for intervening in such processes and new openings for a proposal that challenges the production of highly uneven urban landscapes, by shifting existing power dynamics within a development site. The proposal is a legislated body called Public Action Review Collaborative (PARC). PARC works to counter the stratification of publics along racial and class lines by moving past distributive notions of justice and offering institutionalized mechanisms in which a representational public can participate in the decision making process affecting their environment.

Keywords:

Citizenship, Participatory Urbanism, Representational Justice, Urban Development, Public Space, Belonging.

This research project engages in the processes and negotiations that take place in the creation of new landscapes of consumption and production. Landscape here refers to the spaces produced through the need of surplus capital to be invested in fixed and human assets. Their built form derives from cycles of valorization and devalorization, land speculation and profit maximization, and is produced for a new ascendant class identity born out the most recent labor force restructuring.¹ Situating this within the growing trend of public-private partnerships, our work is born out of a trans-disciplinary methodology, actionable theory, for investigating, interpreting and intervening in the production of ‘public’ space within such landscapes.² This methodology includes a reflexive theory practice binary. Theoretical analysis, site observation, and site analysis are at the core of this approach. Of particular interest are the areas of intersection among these three methods, where productive spaces are created for investigation – as new ways of conceptualizing space – and generation – as the fertile ground for the production of

such space.

This allows for the creation of new mechanisms for the participatory production of ‘public’ space within which participatory and democratic acts are possible. In order to investigate the current development of public-private space, we are looking at large scale luxury redevelopment projects in New York City.³ These sites are significant to study because they are one of the current manifestations of the production of such new landscapes being packaged through a number of provisions, namely affordable housing and open, ‘public’ space, within neighborhoods with established communities. To what extent do these spaces meet the objectives they promise to communities, typically in need of more green space? How do these benefits weigh against the potential costs of development? This research questions how the process of production of such landscapes and its outcomes participate in the shaping of citizenship, belonging and representation.⁴

Through actionable theory, new openings are established for multiple publics to take part in such space production through a proposal for a legislated body, which we have called Public Action Review Collaborative (PARC). PARC is a participatory model, with binding authority that expands democratic practices by including representational justice in local politics.⁵ It oversees the production and management of 'public' space, creating long term structural change and challenging the power imbalance in urban development. The objective is a city mandated model that is replicable across New York. Applying the model of agonistic pluralism, which involves relations between adversaries who share common (symbolic or physical) space but seek to organize it in different ways, allows for the recognition that a politics without adversary falsely seeks to reconcile all interests provided that they align with the project at hand and can be part of the 'people' or thus legitimate public (Mouffe, 2000). PARC draws on this conception by enabling productive agonism within space production, recognizing the failure of consensus, and advocating for the necessity of multiple publics, while concurrently seeking change within the existing system.

It is our contention that the 'public' spaces produced within such redevelopments participate in a broader trend of spaces of amenity for the adjacent luxury developments generated through public subsidies but do not consistently contribute to the welfare of the general public. The formulaic design typically creates predefined uses tied to commercial entities, creating spaces that become commodified and depoliticized sites for consumption and passive recreation. Further, their effect is not neutral but rather they carry agency in contributing to rising land values, speculation, and the ever increasing upscaling of the city. We argue that the conceived cost-benefit calculus represents a consensus amongst the status quo — public officials, private developers, and the public — and goes unquestioned. Thus, they contribute to existing contradictions in the urban process and decision-making inherent in public-private partnerships.

PARC reconfigures the current distribution of exchange rather than use value generated from 'public' space and new landscapes of consumption and production. Currently, private interests, vested in these spaces, radically limit access and a sense of belonging. Activating belonging and represen-

tation adds significant value to current democratic structures and enables new conceptions of publicity to be generated (Fraser, 1990). Here publicity entails firstly, the establishment of a site for communication, engagement, and contestation; secondly, the relationships within a site between multiple publics; and thirdly, the various ways in which publics express themselves and form discursive spaces (Young, 2000).

The purpose of such design is to create spaces that reveal and challenge existing power relations by providing openings for dissent and new possibilities for action (Di Salvo, 2010).⁶ PARC introduces a new means of envisioning space production that is contra to the status quo. Its purpose is to enable contestation around issues of ownership, displacement, disagreement, access, and representation. PARC draws on our concept of productive agonism through, first, exposing the root of such conflicts and unmasking a fake sense of consensus; second, providing the essential deliberative spaces for contestation; and third, granting the legislative power to institutionalize its outcomes.

In examining the multiscale forces that shape our new landscapes of consumption and production, we bear witness to economic and political structures that infiltrate numerous aspects of our daily lives, from sites as intimate as the body and home, to our public spaces, urban localities, and global sites of encounter. It is fundamental to look at the interstices of human action, capital flows, cycles of investment and disinvestment, and everyday spaces of deliberation and struggle in order to begin to carve out openings for alternative modes of cohabiting and commoning that are more just and representative. This also means we must radically shift our understandings of where such critical sites for action reside. We need to look to state institutions for the generation of new modes of exercising our citizenship within new democratic spaces of struggle, contest, and productive agonism. This requires a more expansive idea of what state institutions can offer, beyond merely a means for opposing corruption and power, as spaces of difference, social change, and representative justice. In introducing PARC as an institutionalized body, we

aim to harness the critical potential of institutions as deliberative spaces of action.

Notes

1 For a more in depth discussion of these processes, see Harvey (1978) and Deutsche (1996).

2 'Public' refers to privately owned or managed, publically accessible spaces. Also known as open space within mixed use developments.

For a critique of public- private partnerships, see Julian Brash's (2011) examination of New York City under the Bloomberg administration. For a more general and historical critique, see Harvey (1989).

3 This research was completed during 2014-2015 in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where both practitioners reside. Some of the research methods included historical document and archive collection, individual interviews, expert interviews, workshops, and participant observation.

4 Holston and Appadurai (1996) provide a more expansive notion of citizenship that we draw on in our work. We also apply the framework of Insurgent citizenship – citizenship that is not bound by the nation state and seeks other forms of legitimacy – which is critical to rethinking what 'social' means, and the realm of possibility rooted in heterogeneous lived experience (Holston, 1995).

5 For a discussion of representational justice, see Iris Marion Young (1990). Representational Justice involves providing mechanisms that account for and give voice to marginalized populations regardless of the proportionate representation of the group in relation to the rest of the public.

6 As academic practitioners, we continue to shift between feeling unable to accept working within current development processes and by default participating and perpetuating highly uneven structures. On the other hand, we are also aware that structural systemic change in the organization of city development and building is unlikely to fundamentally happen, so we question whether completely stepping back from business practices serves the communities we seek to protect.

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The Sex of Graffiti

Urban art, women and “gender perception”: testing biases in the eye of the observer

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Abstract

In this paper I explore the intersection between urban creativity and gender studies, through a composite methodology and with a double purpose: to examine the role and the recognition of women in the graffiti and street art milieu; and to test the existence, the extent, and the quality of gender biases in the eye of the observer. In order to accomplish these two tasks, I examined existing literature treating the subject and created a visual survey. Observations and results from each step of the present work reveal a general lack of recognition of women’s role in street art and graffiti, as well as a remarkable amount of gender preconceptions during mere aesthetic appreciation of urban works of art.

Keywords: Graffiti, Street Art, Gender Studies, Perception, Women, Sex

1. Introduction

The amount of unsolved debates around the redefinition of urban art is as copious as it is thrilling: since the outburst of festivals and the media overexposure of street art and graffiti during the last fifteen years, academia is trying to provide new historical, philosophical and sociological interpretation to a certain amount of conundrums. To name a few: the entrance of urban art in museums, galleries and private collections; the transition from an unconventional expressive phenomenon to a widely recognized art form; and its increasing institutionalization despite an original aura built upon illicitness and the ephemeral. The very last years came along with some new, fascinating challenges. One of those may arise, for instance, from the intersection between urban creativity and gender studies: that is exactly where this work begins.

Such an intersection is not an unexplored field: even a superficial bibliographical survey allows one to check that some preliminary approaches have already been led during the Fifties, starting with Alfred Kinsey (1953). Also, a first mono-

graph dealing thoroughly with graffiti and gender studies has been written by British ethnologist Nancy MacDonald (2001) who interviewed female writers like Lady Pink, Claw and Akit, and nevertheless drew an analysis of graffiti as a form of “display of masculinity”. Nevertheless, the present research aims to inform about street art and gender studies through an unedited approach.

In the first place, despite the chosen title, this study is not limited to graffiti-writing: the word “graffiti” is here employed in a conventional, all-embracing fashion, meaning different types, styles, scales and techniques of contemporary urban art, including muralism, stenciling, installation/sculpture, figurative and abstract street painting, and so on. A second difference between this work and its precursors lays in their respective purposes. Sociological (Stocker et al., 1972), ethnographical (MacDonald, 2001), psychological (Kinsey, 1953; Dundes, 1966), criminological (Trahan, 2011) or feminist (Rosewarne, 2004) approaches pay attention to the motives of the writers – who are rarely considered as artists and consistently observed as simple means of data collec-

tion – in order to describe gender dynamics within their actions and activities. On the contrary, the present research aims to stress the relevance of urban artworks' styles and aesthetics, in order to test gender perceptions in the eye of the observer. In other words, I am not considering here the writer/artist's standpoint, but rather that of the graffiti/street art spectator. The main questions here being: in which measure can a street artwork express or reveal masculinity or femininity? Which place do gender, sex, eroticism or even pornography occupy in urban creativity? Which is the role of style and aesthetics?

One can perhaps ask why this study limits its observations to urban artworks and whether the question of gender perception does not rather concern the entire domain of visual arts. Such phenomena as graffiti and street art are indeed a quite fitting case for our purposes: let us imagine standing in front of a "conventional" artwork, canvas or installation, that we have never seen before and that is "conventionally" exhibited inside a whitecube space, like a museum or a gallery. In most cases, we have access to information about the sex of the artist: while looking at an artwork in those spaces we are constantly surrounded by labels and biographical notes, and we rarely find ourselves wondering whether an artwork has been made by a man or a woman. Let us suppose now to bump into a parietal artwork located in an urban context. Unless we are graffiti or street art connoisseurs, the sex of the artist will always remain undisclosed because of the almost certain lack of written indications. The same would occur when in front of signed/tagged artwork: is it really possible to guess the sex of works by 108 (man), Swoon (woman), Kashink (woman) or Xooox (man), only through their signatures?

The widespread habit of the tag among writers and street artists implies an actual concealment of the artist's sex – except, of course, when the artist decides to add clues to their tags: Mr. Brainwash, Miss Van, Miss Tic, Monsieur Chat, Madame Moustache, Lady Pink, etc., or when they simply use their actual names (Maya Hayuk, Barry McGee, Nuria Mora, Agostino Iacurci, Magda Sayeg, etc.).

The choice of hiding one's gender or not may have interesting reasons and perhaps correspond to a particular will or statement. Nevertheless, when every possible clue is concealed, would the observer wonder about the artist's sex? If

solicited to guess it, what would their response be?

2. Urban art between androcentrism and gendered aesthetics

The world and history of Western art have for a long time known a clear disparity between women and men (Nochlin, 1971).¹ As Linda Nochlin puts it in her groundbreaking 1971 essay "Why have there been no great women artists?": things as they are and as they have been, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class and, above all, male (Nochlin, 1971: 25).

The causes, according to Nochlin, have to be sought in a status quo made of a vast dark bulk of shaky idées reçues about the nature of art and its situational concomitants, about the nature of human abilities in general and of human excellence.

Though such a disparity remains evident today in several social and cultural environments, the rise of feminist movements during the 20th century led women to gain influence in the arts, including contemporary visual arts.²

What about urban art, then? Interviewed for British newspaper *The Independent* in 2013, graffiti photographer Martha Cooper stated that, if formerly women represented 0.1% of graffiti writers and street artists, perhaps today they are the 1% (Wyatt, 2013). Of course Cooper's numbers do not mean to be statistically relevant: they just aim to stress an undeniable situation of minority. Estimating an actual and accurate men/women ratio would require a considerable amount of fieldwork in order to take into account as many underrepresented artists as possible throughout the world. Another way, surely more approximate but yet significant is, for instance, to check how and how much women are taken into account by the urban art "establishment" – i.e., books, museums and galleries exhibitions, media coverage, etc.

It just takes one to survey any specialized book in order to ascertain street art and graffiti's androcentrism. Let us consider, for instance, three major publications having the explicit purpose of serving as world indexes or anthologies of street and graffiti artists. The first is "Graffiti World. Street art from the five continents" by Nicholas Ganz (2004). Only 11 out of 144 artists taken into account by the book are women,

i.e., 7.6%.³ “From style writing to art”¹ (2011), the anthology curated by French gallerist Magda Danysz, does not show any substantial change: 4 women out of 46 artists, i.e., 8.7%. Nor does most recent “World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti” (2013), by Rafael Schacter and John Fekner: 3 artists out of 97 are women, with a share of 3.1%.

In addition to underrepresentation, Nancy MacDonald’s ethnographical research (2001) give us an in-depth account of some gender dynamics within the graffiti milieu. Her main standpoint being the employment of graffiti by writers as a means to “construct and confirm their masculine identities” (MacDonald, 2001: 96), MacDonald goes ahead by observing what happens when women penetrate a predominantly male subculture. Her methodology implies direct contact with the artists, both men and women, through interviews. Most of the collected answers reveal the idea of graffiti writing as a dangerous activity, therefore not particularly suitable for women. It is noteworthy that this kind of statement does not only come from men, but from women as well: MacDonald (2001: 130) observes that, “The female writer’s task is a difficult one. Male writers work to prove they are ‘men’, but female writers must work to prove they are not ‘women.’” It follows that if being a male writer is an assertion of masculinity, being a female writer is a negation of femininity.

Analogously, political scientist Lauren Rosewarne (2004) reads graffiti as a statement of virility but submits it to a harsh feminist critique. According to Rosewarne, graffiti writing can be assimilated to highly sexualized outdoor advertising, therefore it should be considered as a form of street harassment. Some curious, sort of Freudian points seem to arise from Rosewarne’s critique: for instance, the correlation between aerosol paint and ejaculation, or the idea that men are more “visual” than women:

[...] ‘visuals’ are very important to the construction and reaffirmation of masculine culture. Just as tagging a blank wall is an externalization of masculinity, it can be argued that the same thing is happening in outdoor advertising: the erection of a sexualised billboard is a way for men to externalise their sexual interests and desires. When the display of women is done in a way that uses women’s bodies and sexuality as the primary attention getter, this is evidence of the importance of the visual to masculine culture. [...] Both the graffiti artist and advertiser see blank walls and unused spaces, not

as public sites, but rather as apt targets for the projection of their ideas and agendas at the expense of others: in the process allowing a public space to become male space that can prove exclusionary for women. This ‘branding’ of public space through advertising parallels the motives and implied claims staked by graffiti writers over public space (Rosewarne, 2004: 17-18).

The treatment of gender discrimination within graffiti is, thus, very different between Rosewarne’s and MacDonald’s analyses. The former sees graffiti writing as a form of violent and sexualized possession of the public space, carried by a male community. The latter, on the other hand, aims to stress physical differences between the two sexes and women’s aptitude to face concrete dangers like being pursued by the police, moving quickly through viaducts and railways, and so on. Nonetheless, MacDonald provides us with interesting data concerning visual discrimination as well. In other words: she raises the question of a male and a female aesthetics within graffiti writing, like in an interview with graffiti writer Freedom, where MacDonald (2001: 130) reports that female writer Lady Pink had to quit “painting flowers” in order to be accepted in the crew: she had to “paint like a guy2.” This conversation gives us important information about the acceptance rituals a girl should submit to in order to join a graffiti crew, but at the same time it is the first and only excerpt in MacDonald’s study where a distinction is made between men and women: a distinction of style and content.

This has been the object of several studies led by psychologists and sociologists cited in the introduction of the present work. The graffiti observed by those scientists are, nevertheless, far different from those I am taking into account for my study: surveys by Kinsey (1953), Dundes, Farr and Gordon (1965), Stocker et al. (1972), Bates and Martin (1980), among others, pay particular attention to latrinalia, i.e., wall inscriptions – words, names, sentences, statements, drawings, etc. – made in public restrooms. The main reason to study public restrooms lays in the fact that they represent an immediate means to separate men and women, therefore an easy way to categorize, both quantitatively and qualitatively, their respective inscriptions. It may be surprising to observe that the results of these studies do not always reveal a majority of men in wall writing: the quantitative difference between male and female inscriptions converges or diverges according to several parameters like the social and cultural

environment or the site and the year in which data have been collected. For instance, most recent research reveals fewer discrepancies than those of the 1950s and the 1960s. Kinsey (1953) observes a male preponderance in writing on walls, and that sexualized writing and drawing is more pronounced among men (86%) than women (25%), the latter being more inclined to deal with subjects classified as “romantic” and “philosophical”. However, those very results will be contradicted by other research led during the following years, for instance Farr and Gordon’s (1975). Their work surveyed restrooms at Pennsylvania State University, which showed 60% of sexualized inscriptions in women’s stalls and only a 30% in those of the men. Bates and Martin (1980) corroborate this trend by examining restrooms at the University of Massachusetts: 657 inscriptions in female restrooms against 526 in male ones; 78.8% sexualized inscriptions in the former, 54.8% in the latter. Such changes in proportions and contents between men’s and women’s inscriptions can be read as an outcome of women’s emancipation during the 1970s.

Kinsey (1953) interpreted his results claiming that men are more sexually aroused by infraction, while women are more observant of social conventions and moral codes; therefore they are less inclined to write/draw on walls and to treat erotic subjects. American folklorist Alan Dundes also conducted a study on latrinalia (1965), explaining men’s tendency to write/draw on walls by means of an extravagant, Freudian-flavored “pregnancy envy” theory:

[...] men are envious of women’s ability to bear children and they seek to find various substitute gratifications [...] males commonly use their anuses to provide substitutes for parturition. Feces, like babies, are produced by the body. When a man defecates, he is a creator, a prime mover. Women produces feces too, but since they can produce babies from within, there is less need for women to emphasize this type of body product (Dundes, 1965: 102).

His conclusion is quite lapidary:

That women have less need of fecal substitute activities is suggested by the fact that few women indulge in sculpture, painting, blowing wind instruments, etc (Dundes, 1965: 102).

There is no need to dwell on proving the contrary of Dundes’ statement: it would just take citing a recent study led by Pennsylvania State University’s anthropologist Dean Snow

(2013), who measured the size of Paleolithic handprint stencils in Spanish and French caves, suggesting that the 75% of them were left by women.

The ensemble of the cited studies traces an interesting research path to build upon hypotheses about gender discrimination. Conclusions like a minor inclination to creativity or infraction in women are the product of a specific period and mindset, and we cannot rely on them in order to read current matters like female underrepresentation in street art and graffiti. And, certainly, as evidenced by Farr and Gordon (1975) and Bates and Martin (1980), we can no longer accept the a priori that women’s writings and drawings are more “romantic” and “philosophical” than men’s.

MacDonald’s (2001) conclusions are probably the most appropriate in order to explain female minority in graffiti writing – physical unsuitableness to danger and discriminatory internal dynamics – but do the same reasons apply to today’s street art? And, most importantly, how is street art perceived today by the public?

One of the most renowned female street artists, Swoon, wrote a noteworthy “Feminist artist statement” on the occasion of her 2014 solo show at the Brooklyn Museum:

At first I was so wound up about being a woman in a man’s field that I didn’t want to talk about it at all. I was making art out on the street, and no one knew I was a woman for at least a year, maybe three. I was adamant about my ‘neutrality’ so to speak. I was concerned with my ability to create things which would be read as universally human, and not tether me to a gender identity, which, I feared, would engulf what I had to bring, and chuck me into that marginalized, patronized place I associated feminism. [...] When people started to call me that guy Swoon, I just let them. Not that I wanted to hide and be considered male, I just thought, when it flips around, and the truth comes out, something in our assumptions will be flipped too... [...] Now I strive to be lucid and imaginative and honest. I want to put new wrinkles in our language. [...] I want no gasps of surprise, though I may have enjoyed them, when people see that the things that I make, are made by a woman (Swoon, 2014: n.p.).

Another important statement comes from French artist Kashink:

KASHINK, one of the few very active female artists in the French graffiti/street art scene, is an atypical person. She often wears a moustache, paints huge protean multi-eyed characters or Mexican skulls, in a very distinctive, vividly colored style, far from traditional girly graffiti aesthetics (Kashink, 2014: n.p.).

Interviewed for Global Street Art, she also claims:

I'm a woman but I don't paint women; I'm not constrained by gender. Most female street artists paint cute, half-naked figures. I think its time to bring something new as a person and as a woman (Global Street Art, 2012: n.p.).

The targets of this last statement are, in all likelihood, French colleagues such as Miss Van or Fafi, who establish their very similar aesthetics on sensual, saucy poupées.

A “neutral” style, a “girly” style, “to paint like a girl” – we have reviewed a set of aesthetic a priori related to gender issues. Particularly, Swoon's and Kashink's words raise a specific question: if what it is supposed to be a “feminine style” is always recognizable (flowers, the use of pink, references to love, and so on) then what we call a “neutral style” seems always to be associated to a masculine hand. Are these conclusions always true? Can we maintain the existence of other criteria allowing one to perceive a certain artwork as “feminine” or “masculine”?

These questions led me to design a visual survey in order to observe the extent to which an heterogeneous set of artworks, made by both women and men, are perceived as masculine or feminine.

3. Graffitisex, an iconographic survey: methodology

In order to test the “sex of graffiti” in the eye of the observer, I created an iconographic survey at the online address <http://www.graffitisex.eu/>, with the support of the CNRS, the Institut du Genre and the Institut ACTE of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. The main task users were asked to accomplish consisted in observing a gallery of artworks whose creators were not revealed. For each artwork, the user was asked to guess the sex of the artist, then to try to explain their answer. The survey was disseminated in French and English, mainly through social networks, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University and Bari Aldo Moro University, throughout a two-week period, from October 23 until November 5 2013. At this date, 658 users had started the survey, but only 242 had successfully finished it. The survey features 24 artworks made by 22 artists (Swoon and Nuria Mora are featured with two artworks each) following this order:

Table A

A.1	Swoon ♀	A.9	YZ ♀	A.17	Utah ♀
A.2	Miss Tic ♀	A.10	Nuria Mora ♀	A.18	Miss Van ♀
A.3	Maya Hayuk ♀	A.11	Xoooox ♂	A.19	Hot Tea ♂
A.4	Horfe ♂	A.12	MOMO ♂	A.20	JR ♂
A.5	Claw Money ♀	A.13	Swoon ♀	A.21	Kashink ♀
A.6	E. Pignon-Ernest ♂	A.14	Zosen ♂	A.22	Faith 47 ♀
A.7	Mark Jenkins ♂	A.15	Lush ♂	A.23	Nuria Mora ♀
A.8	Microbo ♀	A.16	Magda Sayeg ♀	A.24	Boris Hoppek ♂

The whole corpus can be browsed at the following address: <http://bit.ly/1J9xXXt>.

The ratio of men to women with regard to the number of artworks is 10:14 (41.7%; 58.3%). Obviously, it does not correspond to an actually existing men/women ratio within

the urban art milieu: having already explained the difficulties in measuring that and how underrepresented women are in the “institutional” urban art establishment, my main concern was not to reproduce accurate proportions. On the contrary, I preferred to create an iconographic corpus where men are underrepresented and artworks are classifiable under six

“hidden categories” – i.e., undisclosed to the users – my purposes being the following:

a. To observe whether the final results show a substantial overturning of the men/women ratio, in order to demonstrate a generic gender bias existing within street art and graffiti perception.

b. To unearth, demonstrate or contradict common gender biases in the eye of the observer. To determine their quality and reveal the existence of new and unexpected biases.

The six “hidden categories” are the following:

Table B

	Artworks	Category
B.1	A.2, A.7, A.11, A.13, A.14, A.15, A.16, A.18, A.19, A.23, A.24	Gender-stereotypical artworks This category is composed by images that may correspond to common gender biases, like those revealed by previous surveys and field studies (Kinsey and MacDonald above all). Selected images show a certain range of motifs (dance, female fashion, flowers, etc.), colors (a predominance of pink) and techniques (embroidery).
B.2	A.1, A.3, A.4, A.5, A.6, A.8, A.9, A.10, A.12, A.17, A.20, A.21, A.22	“Neutral” artworks These artworks are considered “neutral”, as for their lack of immediate stereotypical elements.
B.3	A.3, A.10, A.12	Abstract street art Is abstract street art perceived as masculine or feminine?
B.4	A.4, A.5, A.15, A.17, A.19	Graffiti Is graffiti still considered a “men’s job”?
B.5	A.2, A.9, A.15, A.18, A.24	Erotic/pornographic street art This category is composed by three women and one man, and aims to test whether sexual content is perceived as masculine or feminine.
B.6	A.1, A.10, A.13, A.23	Same artist’s artworks This category is made of two artworks by Swoon (1-13) and two by Nuria Mora (10-23). For each artist, I have selected a “gendered” (13-23) and a “neutral” (1-10) artwork. My purpose was to test whether any gender bias revealed is less or more powerful than the stylistic identity of two artworks made by a same artist.

All data have been collected, edited and organized in three appendices (D, E, F) that can be consulted at the following web address: <http://bit.ly/1FJf4Xn>.

Before starting the survey, users were asked to indicate their age, country, sex, and study level (Appendices: D). Once put in front of each image, the user was asked to answer two questions:

a. In your opinion, what is the sex of the artist?

- M
- F
- I already know the sex of the artist. ⁴

b. Try to justify your answer: why did you choose one sex rather than the other?

- Because of its subject
- Because of its style (colors, forms, technique)
- I don’t know how to justify my choice
- If you prefer, feel free to write down all the reasons, the elements and the ideas you based your choice on [Text box]

1. Graffitisex: results

Looking at the percentages of the users’ answers, the survey’s results show a substantial overturning of the correct man/women ratio, from 10:14 (41.7%; 58.3%) to 15:9 (62.5%; 37.5%), confirming the general trend urban of seeing urban art as a predominantly male activity. The main results are summarized in the following table:

Table C

Artist	Actual Sex	Users' Answer (%)		
		♂	♀	"I know"
Swoon	♀	75.2	18.6	6.2
Miss Tic	♀	46.9	31.5	21.6
Maya Hayuk	♀	64.3	33.2	2.5
Horfe	♂	76.6	18	5.4
Claw Money	♀	68.8	27.9	3.3
Pignon-Ernest	♂	50.4	43.3	6.3
Mark Jenkins	♂	30.3	63.1	6.6
Microbo	♀	35	55.8	9.2
YZ	♀	55.2	39.8	5
Nuria Mora	♀	70.3	25.5	4.2
Xoooox	♂	25.3	70.1	4.6
MOMO	♂	66	24.8	9.2
Swoon	♀	18.1	70.5	11.4
Zosen	♂	34.6	62.1	3.3
Lush	♂	59.1	34.7	6.2
Magda Sayeg	♀	12.6	79.9	7.5
Utah	♀	83.3	10.8	5.4
Miss Van	♀	37.3	44	18.7
Hot Tea	♂	26.4	70.3	3.3
JR	♂	45	30.2	24.8
Kashink	♀	64.7	25.2	10.1
Faith 47	♀	80.4	13.8	5.8
Nuria Mora	♀	8.8	87.5	3.7
Boris Hoppek	♂	60.6	32.8	6.6

This trend, together with several others, is emphasized by the explanations the users gave for their answers (Appendices: E) – especially those collected in the text boxes (C) – and by the analysis of the six “hidden categories”.

We learn, for instance, that a motive like dance (A.7 Mark Jenkins ♂) is considered a priori as a clue of femininity by 66.4% of the users choosing F. We can count analogous trends when in presence of flowers, laces and arabesques (C.9), a “childish aesthetics” (A.14 Zosen ♂), or the unerotic depiction of women (F.2, F.3), somewhat confirming stereotypes previously disclosed by Nancy MacDonald’s (2004: 4) fieldwork. Furthermore, this last prejudice has been recently displayed by an article on Citylab, claiming Banksy is a woman because “Girls and women figure into Banksy’s stenciled figures, for starters, something that isn’t true of 99 percent of street art” (Kapps, 2014: n.p.). Other common clichés are the correlation between women and artworks releasing a certain aura of “innocence”, “sensitivity” or “romanticism” (C.7), as well as the idea that “women are not capable of achieving hard works (C.8), like monumental wall-paintings (A.3 Maya Hayuk ♀; A.12 MOMO ♂) or because of particular emplace-

ments like freight trains (A.17 Utah ♀) or “slums” (A.22 Faith 47 ♀). Disorder was seen as a masculine characteristic, while order and precision was seen as a feminine one (C.4) – this may remind us of Dundes’ (1965) theory on women’s lack of creativity, if we think about the common association between disorder and creativity.

Results from the “neutral artworks” category (B.2) are quite suggestive as further evidence of the fact that, in absence of common stereotypical elements, a street artwork is very likely to be considered as masculine. Users chose the M option for 12 artworks out of 13. The only one artwork being considered feminine was, surprisingly, by Microbo (A.8 ♀): 59% chose F for its style, 23,9% for its content. Some users explained their choice by claiming that the subject was “childish” (C.7), another by pointing out the presence of “rounded shapes” (C.1).

The opinion to consider “rounded shapes” as a distinctive feature of a “feminine style” (C.1) was quite common, and it is among the most interesting and unexpected results of this work. At the same time, sharp or pointed shapes are

usually associated to a masculine hand. The case of Swoon is particularly remarkable: as already specified, this artist is, together with Nuria Mora, featured twice during the survey. Her first artwork (A.1) was perceived as masculine by 75.2% of the users, mostly because of her style (61%) (E.1) and the presence of “a lot of pointed shapes” (F.1). On the contrary, her second work (A.13) was feminine for 70.5% of the users. Once again the style is the main reason (62.3%) (E.13), as well as “a lot of rounded shapes.” It is noteworthy that these two observations come from the same user: in this case the gender bias “rounded = women / pointed = men” seems to precede the perception of a stylistic similarity. The same applies also to Nuria Mora: A.10 was perceived as masculine by 70.3% of the users while A.23 was considered feminine by 87.5%. The first work (A.10) is also part of the “Abstract street art” category (B.3), which can be considered as a subgroup of the “Neutral artworks” category (B.2). Abstract street art was in fact always considered masculine for the majority of the participants: in addition to Nuria Mora, 64.3% chose M in the case of Maya Hayuk (E.3 ♀) and in that of MOMO (E.12 ♂).

Graffiti remains a man's job (F.5) except for Hot Tea (A.19 ♂). His artwork was perceived as feminine because of its style (79.8%) (E.19), which implies the use of knitting and pink. Works by Horfe (A.4 ♂), Claw Money (A.5 ♀), Lush (A.15 ♂) and Utah (A.17 ♀) were also considered masculine, respectively, for 76.6%, 68.8%, 59.1%, and 83.8% of the participants (E.4-5-15-17).

The “Erotic/pornographic street art” category occupies a special place in this work, because of both its cultural and functional relevance. In the urban environment of Western societies it is all but rare to bump into street advertising making use of implicit or explicit sexualized content, starting from the objectification of women's bodies through commercials. In spite of protests and consciousness raising campaigns, this is still an existing and generally accepted phenomenon. What about erotic urban art, then? Does it enjoy the same type of tolerance as sexualized street advertising? And what happens when an erotic work of art is created in/for the street, and not in/for a gallery or a museum, under cover of the “institutional” art world? Cases of censorship and iconoclasm are quite recurrent. Among the most known, there is one involving Italian muralist Blu. In 2004, during the

Icone Festival in Modena, Blu painted a giant character featuring an upside-down head in place of genitalia. Solicited by an association of parents, the City of Modena ordered the organizers to modify the artwork. Thus the artist covered the head by painting underwear, the final result being even more grotesque, for eventually the giant character seemed to be provided with disproportionate genitalia (Omodeo, 2004). Another incident occurred when French artist Ernest Pignon-Ernest affixed some posters on Montauban cathedral, as part of an authorized intervention dedicated to Ingres. Pignon-Ernest's drawings portrayed some angels provided with genitalia: a group of young Catholic activists, covered the angels' sexes with old newspapers, in a nighttime, graffiti-like action (Vironneau and Vaute, 2009). We have already seen the evolution in the results of different latrinalia surveys. In 1953, Kinsey showed that sexualized inscriptions and drawings were a predominantly masculine activity, then this conclusion was confuted by Farr and Gordon, and Bates and Martin, respectively in 1975 and 1980. Today we know that both men and women are producing erotic or even pornographic urban art, as witnessed in 2013 by an exhibition at the Museum of Sex in New York, entitled “F*uck Art” and featuring women street artists like Miss Van and Aiko (Museum of Sex, 2015). Nevertheless, the present survey shows that engaging in erotic art is very likely to be perceived as a masculine trait. The representation of female nudity was constantly seen as a men's activity, as demonstrated by several answers (F.3) on Miss Tic (A.2 ♀) and Mark Jenkins (A.7 ♂). As for the depiction of genitalia or pornographic scenes, like in Lush (A.15 ♂) and Boris Hoppek (A.24 ♂), users chose M respectively in 59.1% and 60.6% of cases.

1. Conclusion

It is a well observable fact that today women are playing a pivotal role in the artistic disciplines commonly known as graffiti and street art, by employing a wide range of contents, aesthetic languages, styles and techniques. Nevertheless, the results of the survey seem to confirm the general impression that the perception of urban art is deeply affected by all sorts of gender prejudices. The most impressive – and quite discouraging – data from this survey concerns perception of “neutral” artworks: “things which would be read as universally human, and not tethered to a gender identity,” to quote

Swoon's (2014: n.p.) statement, are almost always judged as masculine, and women's recognition as urban artists seems to be bound to a certain preconceived idea of "feminine aesthetics".

Nochlin, who had already questioned this as a general issue of the art world, in her aforementioned 1971 essay, argues that "the mere choice of a certain realm of subject matter, or the restriction to certain subjects, is not to be equated with a style, much less with some sort of quintessentially feminine style (Nochlin, 1971: 24)." "Feminine aesthetics" preconceptions lie not on a misconception of what femininity is, but rather on a misconception of what art is, on "the naïve idea that art is the direct, personal expression of individual emotional experience, a translation of personal life into visual terms (Nochlin, 1971: 24)." Nochlin argues – and I do not hesitate to agree with her – that,

the making of art involves a self-consistent language of form, [...] given temporally-defined conventions, schemata or systems of notation, which have to be learned or worked out, either through teaching, apprenticeship or a long period of individual experimentation (Nochlin, 1971: 25).

It follows that when time and opportunities for self-realization, learning and individual experimentation are lacking, and when this lack is caused by inaccessibility, discrimination and underrepresentation, then it is very difficult to become a recognized artist.

Coming back to graffiti and street art, the question is: can this perceptual trend be subverted?

It is my opinion that women will not benefit from how the media usually deal with their role in urban art, i.e., by exclusively considering their art in terms of gender, and by stressing how women measure up to their male colleagues (e.g., Wyatt, 2013; Frank, 2014; Hawkins, 2014). Their interest in urban art made by women seems inherently devoted to this wrong, obsolete and deleterious idea of a "gendered aesthetics" to highlight what makes a woman different in aesthetic and content terms. To actually challenge the status quo, activists, critics and curators should perhaps engage in a more profound analysis – they should speak about women not by comparing them to men, nor by isolating them, as in publications like Nicholas Ganz's (2006) "Graffiti Woman" or in women-only hype exhibitions like Wynwood Walls' 2013

"Women on the Walls" edition (Juxtapoz, 2013). The problem with such books and exhibitions lies in their "cabinet of curiosities", entertaining approach: in no case will this be useful to raise awareness about women's historical role and difficulties, but only to promote the idea that a woman doing graffiti is a 'funny' oddity worth seeing.

At the same time, I am fully persuaded that literature and exhibitions can play a crucial role in this challenge, but only as long as they have a truly historical, critical and sociological approach to the subject.

Then, eventually, it will be time to consider "women artists" simply as "artists", and, with Nochlin (1971: 71) to insist on the "creation of institutions in which clear thought—and true greatness—are challenges open to anyone, man or woman."

Notes

1. We cannot discuss here such a long and complex subject as the history of women artists in Western civilizations. In order to have a meaningful overview of women underrepresentation and discrimination during centuries, see Nochlin (1988); Guerrilla Girls (1998); Pollock (2003); Chadwick (2012); and Slatkin (2000).

2. For an up-to-date overview of women's current role in the art world, see Artnews, June 2015. Special Issue: Women in the Art World (<https://www.artnews.com/toc/women-in-the-art-world/>) and particularly Reilly (2015) Taking the Measures of Sexism: Facts, Figures and Fixes (<http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/taking-the-measure-of-sexism-facts-figures-and-fixes/>).

3. This number accounts only for individual artists, not crews nor couples. The same criterion has been adopted for the next books surveyed.

4. The user was asked to check this box, if necessary, only after choosing between M or F. Checking this box let the user move directly to the following image, as justifications were not required.

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“...and I want to paint it black!”

What strategies are there to undermine the reclamation of street art for profit and support public engagement for the interests of citizens?

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Abstract

This working paper will unfold the methodological design of the PhD research project, Behind The Murals – A Participative Webdocu on the Motivations and the Reclamations of Street Art, with a focus on the incident when BLU repainted his murals at Berlin’s Cuvrybrache completely black. In contrast to BLU’s strategy – to erase his art so that it can no longer be made profitable by the investor of the lot or even by Berlin’s city marketing – I aim to investigate what other strategies against the reclamation of street art are imaginable. The main methodological question is, how is it possible to carry out this research in such a way that its results support the communities (potentially) affected by gentrification/touristification to gain a voice? The experimental methods of participatory video and digital storytelling will be applied with the target of producing a participative webdocu accompanied by a locally exhibited video installation.

Keywords:

Street Art, (Re-)valorization, Displacement, Community Action Research, Participatory Video, Digital Storytelling



Fig. 1. Original BLU murals (Blogrebellen, 2014).



Fig. 2. Repainted BLU murals on the 11th of December 2014 in Berlin (Blogrebellen, 2014).

At the end of 2014, the street artist BLU repainted his two murals at Berlin’s Cuvrybrache completely black. It is said that the real estate company advertised their future apart-

ments with the view onto the murals and that BLU did not want to have his art being used for this re-valorization of the lot (Paranyushkin, 2014; Blogrebellen, 2014).

Even though the result – the loss of these murals – has been a sad event for the people who are connected to the Wrangelkiez (Kiez is the Berliner word for district), it is a well-fitting example for my PhD-project *Behind The Murals – A Participative Webdocu on the Motivations and the Reclamations of Street Art*. With attention to the event of the repainted BLU murals, I will unfold in this working paper the methodological design of my PhD project.

So what is the issue with the Cuvrybrache? It is a lot at the border between two popular districts of Berlin: Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain. It is directly connected to the river Spree and has a view onto the Oberbaumbrücke, a bridge often photographed because of its historic brick architecture. Besides having this attractive location, the Cuvrybrache is famous for its story, because for a long time it has oscillated between being reclaimed for the people or for profit.

In the 90s, after the re-union of the German republic, the first development plan for the wasteland failed. Because of its attractive location it soon became one of the places occupied by subcultural movements. 1996 the Yaam Club moved in and lifted up Berlin's reggae scene. In 1998, it was cleared because the former investor wanted to build a shopping mall. But the district itself disagreed and the Cuvrybrache remained a wasteland. In 2007/8, BLU painted the two murals that became an attraction for tourists, got printed on postcards, and were used for various marketing strategies. In 2012, starting as a protest camp against the BMW-Guggenheim-Lab, an unofficial housing area began to develop on the Cuvrybrache which sometimes got stigmatized as

Berlin's first favela. In 2014, after a fire broke out, the camp was cleared. And in the same year, some Wrangelkiez inhabitants started a petition that demanded that the BLU murals should be designated as a listed monument. This was a move against the developmental plans of the new investor of the lot, Arthur Süsskind, because his planned buildings would have hidden the view of the murals. The petition was signed by more than 7,700 people (Herr, 2014). Then something unexpected happened.

On the 11th of December 2014, BLU let his murals be repainted black. The reaction of the media was huge. A critique caught my attention. One blogger said that BLU's actions were not a statement against the reclamation of street art through real estate developers, but an acceptance of the failure of the creative scene. Furthermore, he wrote that this event shortcuts the potential debate about what happens when art is made profitable in such a way (Paranyushkin, 2014; Blogrebellen, 2014). Lutz Henke, the person who in the name of BLU repainted the murals black said that – in contrast – they wanted to make a statement not just against the gentrification of Berlin's districts, but also against the failed cultural policies of Berlin's government. One of his main critiques was the fact that artists are often part of the people who are displaced by gentrification and touristification. He demanded that the government implemented more instruments to safeguard the cultural scene against displacement and, therefore, provide more financial support for a branch that is so important for Berlin's development (Linke and Mösken, 2015; Henke, 2015).

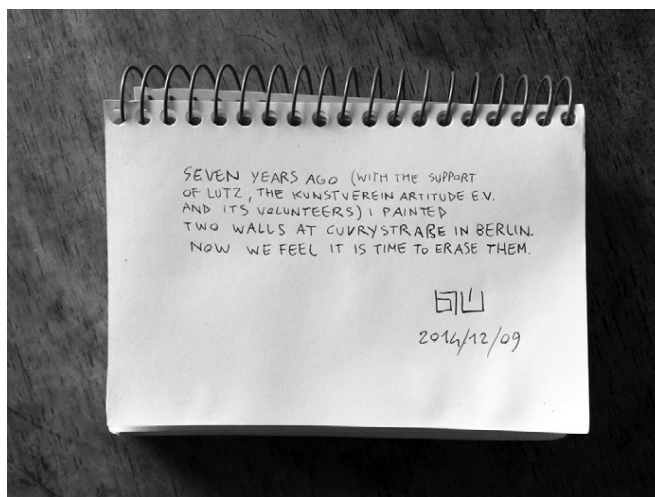


Fig. 3. Henke, 2015

When I visited the repainted murals, it caught my eye that BLU and Henke had left intact the words *your city* from the graffiti-writing *reclaim your city*, which was above one of the former BLU murals. It is open who it is that is addressed by *this your city*: The investors or the citizens?

The investor Arthur Süsskind plans that 10% of the apartments are meant for social housing while Berlin's Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung (the official city development office) demands 30% (Kopietz, 2015). This is the reason why there is still no agreement on the development plan for the lot. So, nothing is built on it by now.

But what do the citizens of the district wish would happen with the wasteland? This information is not accessible. So, it becomes obvious that the *Cuvrybrache* has an exemplary status for Berlin's housing problem, where especially the people (potentially) displaced by gentrification/touristification do not have a voice.

And here, *Behind The Murals* research can directly be introduced. In terms of a Community Action Research approach I ask the question of how the street artists whose art gets reclaimed and the citizens who are (potentially) displaced by gentrification/touristification can become part of my PhD research. Therewith, I aim to gather information about how the street artists and the inhabitants develop cooperatively their opportunities for action. I want to reflect on what results the methodological design may yield and if this is applicable for future approaches.

Coming from the experience from my former research for the documentary, *We Are The Others*, where I realized during postproduction that I would have liked to hand the camera to my interviewees to get their view onto its subject, I decided to develop a participative approach for my next research project. Here two issues arise which often occupy my mind. One is the question of how is it possible to democratize the research process. The second issue is the question of how is it possible to publish the results of the research in such a form that they reach a wider audience and can be used by the people for whom these results can be important visualizations of their issues. My answer is to combine for *Behind The Murals'* methodological design participatory video (see Gubrium 2013; Lunch 2006; Milne et al., 2012; White 2003) and digital storytelling (see Lambert 2013; Center for Digital Storytelling 2013). Therewith, I aim that *Behind The Murals*

will become a participative webdocu with an accompanying videoinstallation exhibited at a public space. By applying participatory video, I aim to conduct each research phase together with the street artists who are going to participate in the research. Here, I will focus especially on the participative, self-reflexive montage where the research process decisions taken can be represented. Through the application of digital storytelling, I aim that the later joining online users of the webdocu and the audience of the videoinstallation can partake in the project, too.

This methodological design will be carried out with reference to the above exemplified subject: The incident of the BLU murals is a perfect example for the potential reclamation of street art for the interests of profit since it can be used to re-valorize real estate – or even the reputation of a city – and, thereby, be successfully sold to attracted gentrifiers/tourists.¹ BLU's reaction against the reclamation of his art was to erase his murals. The evolving question is: Besides BLU's strategy, what other strategies can the participating street artists imagine? Are there other strategies that may give the (potentially) displaced community members the possibility to gain a voice? With the application of my methodological design to this subject, I aim to study if this kind of participative, self-reflexive and audio-visual approach is usable for other urban anthropological/sociological inquiries. Therewith, I seek to find answers to the often-raised critique against these kind of experimental approaches in terms of the objectivity of research. One way to address this is to see if *Behind The Murals'* results will add important aspects to theories on gentrification/touristification and displacement.²

Notes

1) Here Andrej Holm's gentrification/touristification theory seems for me to be an up-to-date explanation for the ongoing developments in Berlin (see Holm, 2009; 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; 2011; and 2013). In general I will use for the subject of *Behind The Murals'* research theories that draw connections between subculture, art and gentrification/touristification (see Florida, 2004 and 2005; Glass, 1964; Ley, 2003; Lloyd, 2006; Reinecke, 2007; C. Schmidt, 2009; Thomas, 2009; Zukin, 1989 and 1995).

2) See Footnote 2. Here, I will focus on the gentrification/touristification theory of Andrej Holm.

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Walls of Freedom: Process and Methodologies

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Abstract

The Egyptian revolution of 2011 produced a massive transformation in the perception of urban space and the interrelated dynamic of people, their bodies, and the language within that space. Cultural expressions such as caricature galleries, makeshift exhibitions, chants, poetry readings, and memorial spaces defined the square as a place where activism and art intersected weaving a lyrical tapestry of the revolution. The most prominent of these expressions was the street art of the revolution where the act of painting on walls re-territorialized the city making it the revolution's barometer by registering the shifting political discourses as they unfolded. Documenting and preserving these visual expressions was the driving force behind a three-year book project, entitled Walls of Freedom: Street Art of the Egyptian Revolution, which narrates the revolution through striking images of the art that transformed Egypt's walls into a visual testimony of bravery and resistance. This article will serve to offer a detailed analysis of the methodologies and tools used in creating the book as well as managing, financing, and collecting all of its necessary components. Primarily focused on qualitative visual research methodologies, the book is layered into three components or levels: one level is a visual journey of the revolution through a chronological image-timeline. The categorization and indexing of images by artist, photographer, date and translation was an important function allowing quick access to images visually placing them in a larger continuum. The second level is a reference-based timeline of events where a connection between the art and the historical/political events is presented. The third level involves the essays and analysis supplementing the timeline with historical implications, political and social contexts and personal voices collected from artists and activists.

Keywords: Egyptian Revolution, Street art, Research Methodologies, Iconography, Political art.

1.1 Introduction: Street Art of the Egyptian Revolution

One of the things that will remain of the Egyptian revolution is its graffiti, which we already began to collect and archive during the first 18 days. It will endure not in its original and ephemeral nature, but in documentation through photos, films, and books like this one. Graffiti has never been more powerful than it is in Egypt today. It encapsulates the essence of what this revolution is—for its people by its artists. The artworks also tell a true history of the events, though it is a history that can easily be tampered with, were it not for professional and honest documentation. We hope our work helps to contextualize this art in a truthful and appropriate manner. It was a meticulous task that took us three years and left us more than once in despair, but even more often humbled (Hamdy and Karl: 260).

The Egyptian revolution of 2011 produced a massive transformation in the perception of urban space and the interrelated dynamic of people, their bodies and language within that space. The uprising metamorphosed Tahrir Square into a liminal space of communal interaction where class, gender and religious boundaries became blurred. Within this arena of celebration and resistance ideas were negotiated, discussed and even tested and performed in poetical enactments. Cultural expressions such as caricature galleries, makeshift exhibitions, chants, poetry readings, and memorial spaces defined the square as a place where activism and art intersected weaving a lyrical tapestry of the revolution. These expressions, whether written, oral, visual or performative produced a new language that redefined the limits of cultural production in public space. The most promi-

ment of these expressions was the street art of the revolution where the act of painting on walls re-territorialized the city making it the revolution's barometer registering the shifting political discourses as they unfold. Street art of the revolution employed rhetoric, humor and cultural references and ranged from scrawls and scribbles to elaborately painted murals covering the walls of Cairo. Repeatedly erased and "cleaned" by the state, the walls were a place of contention where a layered narrative continued to challenge authority and reclaim the right to the city.

1.1.1 Why this book?

Documenting and preserving these visual expressions was the driving force behind a three-year research and book project entitled *Walls of Freedom: Street Art of the Egyptian Revolution* which narrates the revolution through striking images of art that transformed Egypt's walls into a visual testimony of bravery and resistance. Created in close collaboration with artists and photographers on the frontlines of the battle, the book documents how they converted the streets into a dynamic newspaper of the people, providing a much-needed alternative to the propaganda-fueled media. *Walls of Freedom* traces the revolutionary journey from the early pinnacle of extraordinary hope and inspiration to its slow decline, and includes a chronicle of the day-to-day volatile political situation as it rapidly unfolded. The photographs of key events and street art were meticulously collected from 100 photographers, while the written essays were commissioned from experts across many fields. The main focus of the project was to preserve and categorize the images of street art and to present them through a narrative of the historical, socio-political, and cultural backgrounds that have shaped this movement.

The journey for making the book began by laying out the book's goals and setting up a loose methodology for gathering interdisciplinary essays, personal stories and recording key events. The collection of photographs and other visual resources continued throughout the process but was regulated by creating labels and tags to reference each image through a timeline of folders and files that we collected digitally. An iconographic analysis of the images began by mapping the photographs and working with the text-sources. When mapped to a timeline of events it was easy to identify the clusters of significance that were then supplemented with additional texts.

This article will serve to offer a detailed analysis of the methodologies and tools used in creating the book as well as managing, collecting and analyzing all of its necessary components. Primarily focused on qualitative visual methodologies, this article will begin by introducing the framework for research by describing the research project in detail. Then it will focus on various methodologies and strategies for approaching a large-scale visual project including visual and virtual ethnography, interviews, participant observations and iconographic approaches to analysis. It will outline the process of creating a photographic archive and collecting verbal and written components. Then it will discuss some important ethical considerations, and finally it will briefly touch on some specific scenarios relating to visual research projects in shifting social or political circumstances.

1.2 Project Overview

This article is based on three years of extensive field research in Cairo-Egypt between October 2011 and December 2013 and was a collaboration between myself (based in Cairo-Egypt and Doha-Qatar) and my collaborator (based in Berlin-Germany). Together we collected close to 4,000 photographs from 100 photographers over the course of three years. About 100 street artists are featured in this project, and about 30 were closely involved with the development and formulation of the project. The written component consists of a timeline with 250 detailed date entries, 20 extensive essays, 20 short texts and 10 artist texts. There were many challenges involved in working on this project and some of the methodological strategies, approaches, and challenges may prove useful to researchers within the art, design, and other visual disciplines.

The motivation for the project began following the events of the January 2011 Revolution in Egypt and the idea to create a project to document revolutionary street art was born a few months after the revolution had erupted. Almost every event that happened was mirrored on the streets with art that was powerful and left a strong impression on people. There were many obstacles that needed resolution during the initial stages of the project; one of them was that street art or graffiti is not always recognized as a valid form of cultural production and, therefore, is rarely the subject of extensive analysis or research of this magnitude, more specifically, research that strives to uncover multiple perspectives behind the creation and synthesis of the works.

Initially, we discovered some similar attempts at documenting street art in Egypt, however few projects were interested in telling the story of the revolution through street art, which became our primary goal. Our motivation to produce Walls of Freedom was to reflect on a period in Egypt's history where the "visual material is treated as evidence...and as historic sources on culture, politics, society and life at a given time in the past." Visual material is most valuable when it "illuminates both past and present communication processes" (Müller, 2011: 286). Initially, it seemed impossible to bridge a connection between street art, history and the social and political factors behind the movement. As the revolution was still developing as we began creating this project, many of the analyses and research that we worked on in the first year changed by the third year and were thus revised or re-evaluated completely.

Street art in Egypt is a cultural practice that is not associated with one unified group of artists. On the contrary, the street art scene in Egypt – even though it may have been motivated by similar goals – has many internal conflicts within the community and a large division between its members. Some were very protective of their identities, avoiding public interaction, and wished to stay anonymous, whilst others worked openly, and rejected the label of 'graffiti artist.' Some artists, particularly those from the more politically motivated spectrum, simply consider public art as a form of spreading political messages and dissociate themselves from the street art movement completely. The artists' affiliations and skills also varied greatly: whereas some were originally painters or teaching faculty at art institutions, or working in the advertising business, others had no formal training or art-background prior to the Egyptian revolution. Therefore approaching the artists, interviewing them, and involving them in the work required a variety of strategies and approaches.

1.3 Research Methodologies

1.3.1 Visual & Virtual Ethnography:

Art and design research has come a long way over the past several decades. However, reviewing some of the literature available on the topic it is clear that there seems to be a lack of integration in the approaches or strategies for conducting visual-based research. Luc Pauwels (2011: 194) argues that, "visual methods seem to be reinvented over and over again without gaining much methodological depth and often without consideration of long-existing classics in the field."

When designing this book we struggled to find a clear and concise plan on gathering, analyzing, and presenting visual information within a larger cultural framework. Therefore, we approached the problem by borrowing methods and techniques from various sources and paradigms. Using part intuition and part logic our research methodologies evolved as we moved deeper into our topic. Overall the research can be viewed as visual ethnographic research in the sense that it is informed by some classic methods such as participant observation and qualitative interviews, and visual in the sense that it is concerned with the analysis of visual artifacts and relies on photographic archives.

However, these methods provided only a rough guideline and framework to what we can only describe as a part-formulated, part-intuitive experience. Many researchers approach visual ethnography as a method of interviewing and observing participants, however the process we used for our research is less synthetic and more reflexive. It is best described as an "approach to experiencing, interpreting and representing experience, culture, society and material and sensory environments that informs and is informed by sets of different disciplinary agendas and theoretical principles" (Pink, 2013: 34). Therefore, our own experiences, identities, and subjectivities are intertwined within our research and our unique backgrounds and relationships to Egypt and the MENA region were central to our interpretations, connections, and research production. This was something that we were conscious of as researchers and we continued to evaluate our level of empathy or subjectivity, and "how different elements of our biographies, existing experiences, and elements of our identities become significant during research" (Pink, 2013: 37). Therefore, our final project "does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of [our] experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, the embodied, sensory and affective experiences, and the negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced" (Pink, 2013: 35). In order to do this we became committed to research that closely focuses and even includes the artists behind the work rather than study them at a distance. Involving participants at various stages of the research project allows for research that is recordable through scientific research methods, and that is open to discovery through individual subjective experiences.

Social media was integral to the Egyptian Revolution and naturally it was an important source for gathering informa-

tion, tracking down images and contacting participants. Therefore, it is important to also consider various visual methods within “virtual social contexts since Internet technologies offer the opportunity to incorporate new methodologies and tools for visual data gathering and analysis, such as image searching tools, graph programs or geo-mapping” (Ardévol 2011: 86). In discussing a research project conducted in Spain that involved protests and a heavy social media activism, Pink and Postill accurately describe the state of social media fieldwork in a changing political landscape and state that it “often shifts between periods of relative calm and periods of intense activity--even turbulence” (2012: 129). In addition, the nature of social media is complex and a researcher will have to navigate various virtual and non-virtual contexts such as engaging in a Facebook conversation

with an artist, marching in a protest, or uploading a video of an artist spraying a stencil, and these situations “are neither communities nor networks--they are hybrid forms of sociality” where the researcher and the participants form mutual partnerships (Pink and Postill, 2012: 130). This hybrid and fast-shifting form of fieldwork is very descriptive of the state of ethnographic fieldwork in Egypt at the time of the revolution both online and offline. It is also important to understand that these shifts continue to occur and affect the research project even after its completion and publication. The project’s social media outlets, such as the Facebook page, website and twitter accounts, serve to underscore and enhance this sociality and become communities that provide a space for further discussion and knowledge transmission.

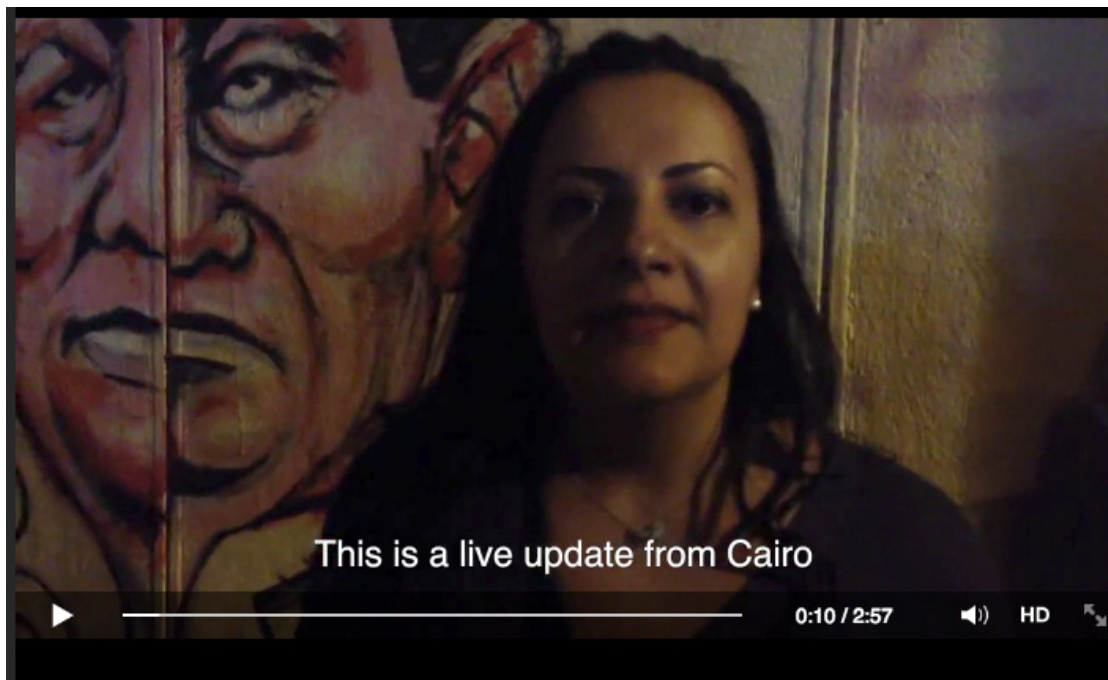


Figure 1. A still from a live update from Cairo posted on our Facebook page on July 2nd 2013 at the Ittihadia Presidential Palace in Cairo soon following the military coup of June 30th and the toppling of President Morsi. The video shows the street artist Picasso surrounded by protestors who are celebrating the coup as he paints a mural predicting who would be the next president of Egypt. This video was shot using a smartphone and updated to our facebook page that same night. It demonstrates the complexity of ethnographic social media research and hybrid fieldwork discussed in section 1.3.1 [Online] Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/WallsOfFreedom/videos/vb.514430378603158/10201619608599008/?type=1&theater>

1.3.2 Interviews and Participant Observation:

Before beginning the project, it was important to conduct thorough research on the topic as well as to identify existing literature and documentation. As mentioned in section 1.3.1., virtual or social media ethnography provided an appropriate strategy for approaching this problem. Furthermore, communicating online with participants before beginning research for projects that are physically located far from the researchers was a crucial step in the process (Pink, 2013). Virtual research methodologies in ethnographic fieldwork are still fairly new, however, they are quickly becoming an important component of visual research:

The internet is not the focus of the research but part of the field for conducting research. Internet forums and communities allow researchers to approach participants gradually and to progressively construct rapport (Ardévol 2011: 77).

My co-researcher and I sent hundreds of emails to potential collaborators ranging from photographers to activists and researchers on related topics. The emails contained information on our planned book project, goals, and questions and invitations for collaboration. At the time, artists were being bombarded by the media, and multiple projects such as documentaries and books were being planned on the topic, therefore, we found it challenging to establish trust with our contributors and participants. The internet was an important first step in establishing connections which later developed into meetings and interviews. Most interview requests were established through social media, emails, and phone calls and consisted initially of structured interviews and participant observation, however, as the project progressed the relationships between us (the researchers/authors) and the artists and activists developed and matured. The three-year project inevitably established trust and allowed us to connect with many participants providing us with invaluable insight and opportunities. The impressions we developed during our initial interviews changed dramatically as events unfolded and time passed. Naturally our own personal backgrounds and connections were important factors in this process. For example, as an Egyptian, my belief systems and political positions were aligned with many of the activists and artists. And as outlined above, our approach to this project was one that celebrated these subjectivities as an important component

of the research. My co-researcher/author is a German street artist and publisher; however, he has family in the Middle East and close personal ties to the region including a strong connection with some street artists based in the MENA region. These personal connections and positions contributed to the relationships we were able to develop with many street artists, some of whom worked closely with us on the project and endorsed it to others.



Fig. 2

Participant observations were varied and were primarily based on either observing street artists creating work, observing or participating in demonstrations or events related to the revolution, as well as experiencing the revolution and the events that unfolded over the course of the three years. These were transmitted in the media, written about on social media, and discussed at gatherings. I do not believe that separating our involvement in the revolution or in the events that surrounded it is logical or even necessary, in fact, as mentioned previously they were “our experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context” and with-

out them this research would not be possible (Pink, 2013: 35). Nevertheless, our writing could not be simply subjective opinion but needed to be based on facts and supplemented with multiple perspectives in order to portray a multi-faceted reality, one that provides insight and contributes knowledge.

1.3.3 Iconography: A Forensic Approach

Müller (2013: 285) defines iconography as “a qualitative method of visual content analysis and interpretation, influenced by cultural traditions,” which is based on the “analysis of visual and textual sources, and their original contexts,” and is similar to a forensic analysis where every detail plays an important part in the overall picture. Panofsky (1982) introduced a three-step approach to iconography, which includes pre-iconographical description, iconographical analysis, and iconological interpretation. The main aspect of iconography is the detailed attention given to every as-

pect which has been likened to “a detective story, in which various threads are woven together to gain a full picture of a given period and its visual reproduction” (Müller, 2013: 286). This method became central to our approach to analyzing and interpreting our visual and verbal data, allowing us to interpret components as parts of a larger whole, with every piece uncovering more clues to further components. This did cause the book to expand in size on multiple occasions and our initial 200 pages had expanded to 268 pages and included 750 photos and illustrations at the time of publication. Iconological interpretation is the ‘crowning’ step in Panofsky’s scheme and requires “several years of scholarly immersion and research and only very few studies fulfill these high expectations... more often the outcome of a hurried iconographical analysis is just an assembly of pictures with similar motifs” (Müller, 2013: 287).

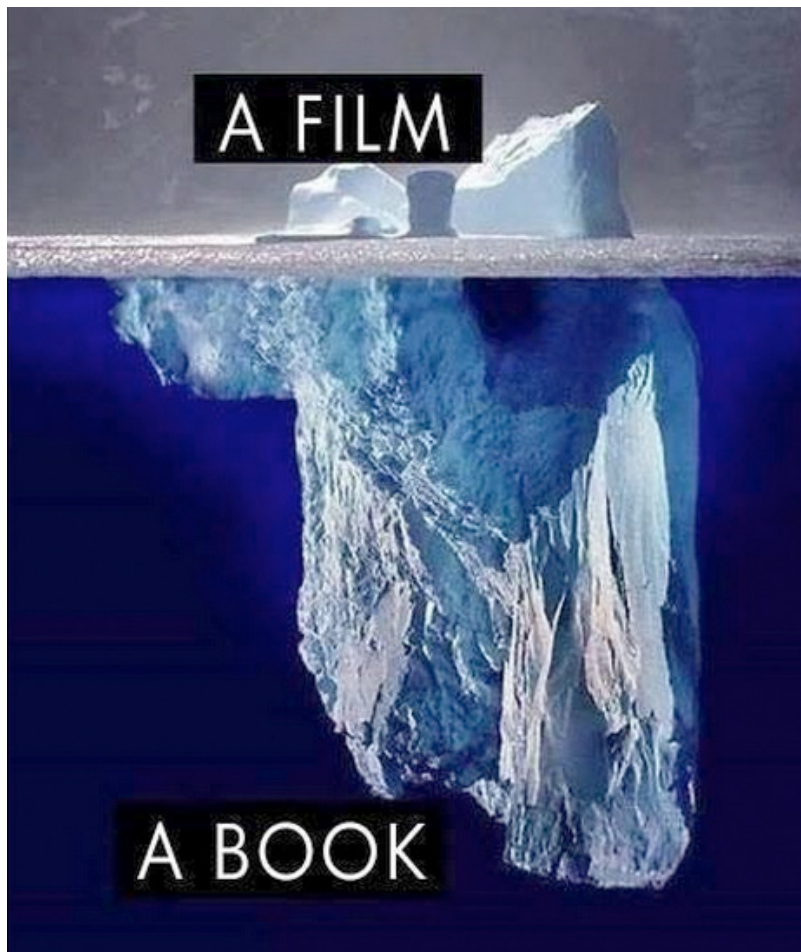


Fig. 3

1.4 Visual Research and Archiving:

1.4.1 The photographers:

Walls of freedom is a predominantly visual research project with images and photographs as a primary source of information and the subject of the project as a whole. Therefore the role of visual research within this context was clear: it would be central to the production of the project. Visual media has long been a crucial element of ethnographic research. However, how the image is actually shot, in what context, and by whom are all important factors to consider. Photographing street art ourselves was an important step in gathering images for the archive, yet it was not always possible for us to be present as events unfolded. Collecting photographs and actually shooting photographs of the work were two separate aspects of the project and served two different purposes. Additionally, when we composed our initial

drafts we knew that graffiti or street art separate from context would not portray a clear image of the motivations behind the work. Therefore, to complete the overall picture of what happened and why artists were creating these works, it was necessary to include images of actual key events. As a result of the volatile nature of Tahrir Square, and particularly during revolutionary battles and violent events, there were few available photographs documenting important events as they unraveled and many of the photographers shooting during these events risked their lives or were injured. Tracking them down and securing permission to publish their images was a big challenge especially in light of the media frenzy surrounding the revolution. Additionally, many were highly compensated for their work and our project's limited funding was a problem. Still, many agreed to publish their images in the book after they learned it would become a form of documentation of their work and of the events of the revolution.



Figure 4. (Art by Sad Panda, Photo by Carmel Delshad.) This photo was shot by Carmel as she was interviewing Sad Panda as he worked on this stencil. It is the only photograph that exists of this work since the next morning it was whitewashed by the municipality, as it was a negative portrayal of the army. Many pieces were whitewashed or destroyed and contacting photographers that sometimes had the only photo of a piece was difficult. This photograph ended up in the book and caused much controversy in the press following the confiscation of the shipment of books in 2015. It was smartphone photo shot around midnight and illustrates why this project needed to include many contributors and photographers.

There is an ephemeral nature to street art but an even more ephemeral nature to the process of its production. One of the lenses we hoped would create a richer look at the street art scene in Egypt during the revolution was engaging with the artists as they worked. Photographs of artists painting in Mohamed Mahmoud Street (a major street in Tahrir Square) were crucial to reflecting an accurate image of the events that unfolded. As discussed by Ahmed Aboul Hassan in Walls of Freedom:

Graffiti is a weapon of the revolution. It rallies the people, challenging us to ask questions and point towards ideas that the mainstream media cannot dare to address. Only the wall has the power to reach the minds of everyday people passing by. The wall brings Egyptians closer to the revolution and further from its many enemies (2014).

It became clear to us that in order to create a multi-faceted project that reflected the many aspects of street art during the revolution we would need to work with many different photographers. The photographs were, in many cases, discovered through social media and the photographer contacted by email or phone. Citizen journalism and the transmission of photography and video on social media – to make up for the frequent media blackouts and to counter media propaganda – was common during the revolution. This was an important component that contributed a great deal to our research project since “the breakdown of the cultural circuit dominated by mass media production...the intermingling between amateur, commercial and institutional production has become more and more complex and has blurred the clearly defined roles of producers and audiences” (Ardévol 2011: 81). Culture producers were now the revolution’s protestors and participants and were able to snap decent photographs with their smartphones. This naturally fed into the availability of images on the web of both amateur and professional quality, and in some cases the images produced by amateur photographers were quite unique, or often the only documentation of a particular piece/event.

1.4.2 Tagging/ The Archive:

The organization of the images into categories was an important step in understanding the material that we collected. Since we were living in different locations it became clear

that the archive needed to exist on the Internet. DropBox became a viable solution and we began by creating detailed folders and indexing formulas to create a tagging system for the photographs and files. The process of archiving and tagging is an essential component to the project’s organization and an “essential part of the iconological research process. Scholars collect visuals and categorize them, thereby constantly sharpening their analytical understanding of the studied visual topic” (Müller, 2013: 287).

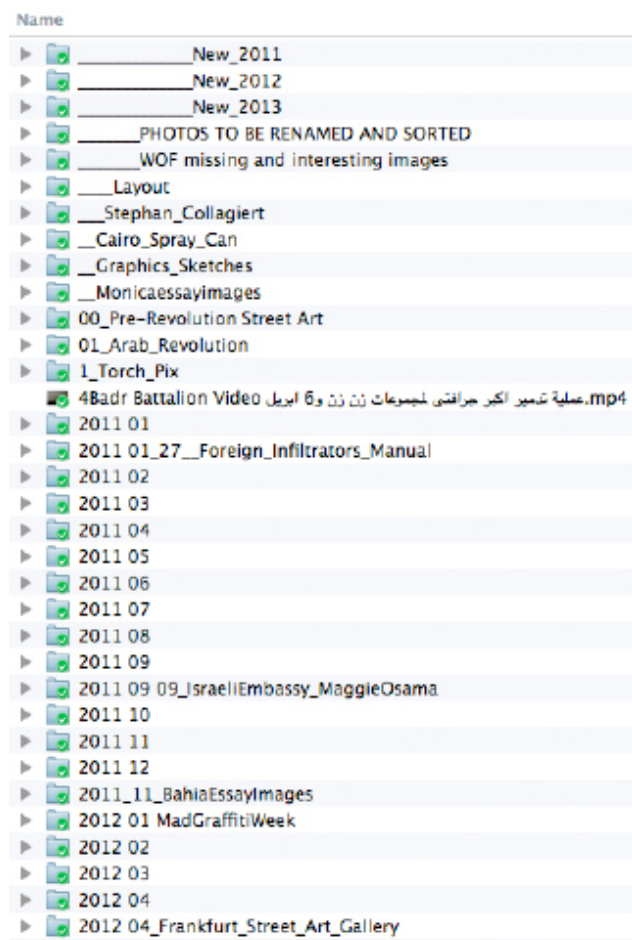


Figure 5. Screenshot of the Walls of Freedom DropBox Archive

Pink and Postill (2012) discuss the navigation of the social media ethnographer through data and how archiving has evolved from disk storage to cloud platforms such as Drop-Box and Google docs. Additionally they discuss the acces-

sibility of tagged web content, which allows easier access to archived images on the web and how this can benefit ethnographers by offering an “‘open’ in place” that offers not only “practices of gathering and accumulating, but also of sharing, linking, following, tagging” (Pink and Postill, 2012: 129). The essence of tagging is to categorize images, whether photographs of the graffiti or of the events, using labels and keywords. For our collection of work that spanned three years, tagging and creating categories by date was the first step. Each photograph itself was tagged by labeling it with a sequence of descriptions in a particular order. Each tag included the date, name of artist, name of photographer, name of the work and any relevant keywords that could relate it to the text or timeline. Tagging the photos into date folders allowed us to identify the missing gaps in our collections and to identify the clusters of significance that were used as key moments throughout the book, supplemented with information. As the project developed we began to visually interpret the images by mapping them to the text sources and timeline of events that was being developed.

1.5 Verbal and Written Research:

It is true that a picture is worth a thousand words, however, context is an important aspect to consider when creating a project about a political and social event like the Egyptian revolution. The intended meanings and interpretations behind a particular piece will change completely given enough background information. During the initial stages we realized that we did not want to create a coffee table book that enthusiasts could flip through to look at beautiful imagery or, as mentioned previously, “just an assembly of pictures with similar motifs” (Müller, 2013: 287). In order to do justice to the artists, photographers, and activists of the revolution we had a responsibility to preserve an important period in Egypt’s history. Our goal was to try to represent the situation as accurately as we could and accuracy could only happen through meticulousness. As daunting as the task seemed, we knew we could not leave a stone unturned. We approached the visual image database with a multi-pronged approach, collecting images by many different photographers and in varying contexts. The written texts would also need to be multi-faceted, and functioned like pieces of a puzzle that fitted together.

1.5.1 The Timeline:

The timeline provided a backbone for all the text sources and consisted of factual entries of key events that happened over the dates covered within the project. The timeline was a thoroughly researched and verified document that was collected from multiple resources including various TV and printed media resources, interviews, blogs and social media. Only dates that were of significance to the revolution were recorded and explained. The total number of entries written was close to 450. The timeline dictated the overall structure of the final design of the book and it made sense that the images and photographs should be placed chronologically against the timeline.

1.5.2 The Essays:

The essays were 2000-2500 word documents that served two main roles: the first was to fill any missing gaps and to introduce important in depth analyses of specific topics. The second was to bring together visual and verbal sources, attributing meaning or clusters of meaning and threading together patterns within street art production, linking it to trends within history or current theory. For example, one essay provided an introduction to street art prior to the revolution, another explained in more detail the use of Quranic manuscripts by graffiti artists, and a third was to give an in depth analysis of the Rabaa’ Symbol. The challenge with the essays was how to fit them within the structure of the book. Eventually they became breaks within the overall structure, in some cases placed chronologically or simply to complete the visual flow of the book.

1.5.3 Short Texts:

The essays were long and in depth analyses of the key aspects of the revolution and its artwork. The timeline provided a quick key summary of daily events. However, in order to shed more light on complex events that could not fit within the timeline and were not represented by the essays, we created ‘short texts.’ These were short paragraphs between 200-400 words that elaborated on an important event, key figure, or movement within the revolution that was featured in street art, but was too complex to translate or explain through a caption or in the timeline.

1.5.4 Artists’ writings:

It became clear when interviewing many of the artists that they each had a separate philosophy and they were ap-

proaching the topic using various methods that were distinctive. We invited all of the artists to contribute their personal voices, philosophies, and narratives to the book believing that it would create a more holistic and complete outlook on their motivations and goals in making their work.

1.6 Ethical Considerations:

When working on a research project with many participants there are some standard issues to take into consideration such as informed consent, confidentiality, and harm to participants, 'giving back' and ownership (Pink, 2013). A collaborative approach to research production may help with some of these issues, and address the relationship between participants and researchers:

Normally the relationship between researcher and participants is often characterized as one of inequalities, whereby it is the researcher who stands to gain. Rather than try to redress the inequalities after the event, it would seem better advice to attempt to undertake ethnography that is less exploitative from the outset. If ethnography is seen as a process of negotiation and collaboration with participants, through which they too stand to achieve their own objectives, rather than as an act of taking information away from them, the ethical agenda also shifts (Pink, 2013: 65).

Most of the artists we worked with did not see the project as separating us – the researchers – from them – as participants – and this was due to the fact that we invited them to form a collaborative relationship with us from the start. We were creating this project together, and even though we had our own gains as researchers and publishers, the artists also gained through the book's production and distribution. Furthermore, our connection with the artists through our close collaboration as the project progressed allowed them to fully understand the project in a deeper sense. Pink discusses this important approach as a crucial aspect of visual ethnographic research and states that:

by focusing on collaboration and the idea of creating something together, agency becomes shared between the researcher and participant. Rather than the researcher being the active party who both extracts data and gives something else back, in this model both researcher and participant invest in, and are rewarded by, the project (Pink, 2013: 65).

This was not always the case with the photographers who were contacted for their photographs and not as mutual collaborators. Since the project had limited funds there was very little gain from the photographers' perspective, and many refused us the rights to their photos or were difficult to negotiate with. Ethically, it was important for us to explain that the ownership of the photos would remain solely with them and that the license to print their photos in the book would not grant us the rights to distribute or use the photos for any other purpose. It is very important to clarify rights of use and ownership of photographs before a project is finalized in order to avoid any unwanted surprises. However, the limitations of copyright laws in Egypt and the duration of the project made the process much more complicated.

Furthermore, there were ethical considerations related to the artists and activists participating in the book that we had to examine closely as we were nearing publication. Towards the end of 2013, the situation in Egypt was difficult and the state had tightened its grip on dissent and reinforced exceptional policies such as the protest law and a law criminalizing graffiti (see Hamdy, 2014). The publication of our book would also publicize the names and contact information of graffiti artists, and in order to ensure an ethical outcome we had to re-negotiate consent at different stages of the project to ensure that participants were informed. Since ethnographic research involves making private aspects of people's lives public it was not enough that the artists had agreed to participate in the project; we needed to ensure that under new-found circumstances they were aware of the implications of their consent. As Pink states, "When a participant has already agreed for the materials to be used in publications, sometimes the ethnographer may be left with the task of deciding whether or not to publish" (Pink, 2013: 64).

Before publication we made sure that all artists and photographers in the book were still comfortable with their names, opinions, or contact information to be published in the book. This does not necessarily guarantee that no harm will come to anyone involved in the book since circumstances may change and laws do get passed that may criminalize activities that were previously legal (see section 1.7.2) and this will always remain a risk in fieldwork or research dealing with political topics, thus it is important for researchers to be aware of the possibilities.

1.7 Design and Dissemination

1.7.1 Book Structure and Design

Walls of Freedom was a complicated project to design and would require various components to be integrated onto each spread. The design began with a rough grid and a process of layout and elimination. Photographs, illustrations and visuals were chosen according to their impact and significance. Naturally, key events from the timeline would sometimes dictate the choice. However, some pieces were more popular than others and so became more prominent in the overall page. The rough laying-out of images occurred until each folder was processed and then the discarded or unused images were kept in separate folders for final review. This would allow a collaborator to go back and check if an important image was not used, and it would also help keep track of what was already placed in the layout.

The layout of the book was divided into various sections, or levels, each characterized by a distinctive style for clarity. The first level was the visual journey, which consists of a chronological image-timeline. The categorization and indexing of images by artist, photographer, date, and translation was an important function allowing quick access to images by visually placing them in a larger continuum. The next level was a reference-based timeline of events where a connection between the art and the historical/political events was presented with key date-titles highlighted in yellow for quick

reference. The third level was a series of short texts supplementing the timeline with historical implications, and political and social contexts. Further levels included quotations and personal voices collected from artists and activists, and an image captioning system including translations and interpretations of each image. The book included a table of contents, an artist and photographer index, and supplementary maps showing key locations within Egypt and downtown Cairo.

1.7.2 Financial and political implications:

The book's time/content expansion caused financial constraints resulting in the launch of a successful crowd-funding campaign in June 2013, which raised 186% of the initial requested budget. Crowd-funding is now a viable solution to research projects that cannot obtain sufficient funding from grant awarding organizations. However, it is a fairly new and developing practice, particularly in the visual arts and humanities disciplines. While there were many serious issues with our crowd-funding experience that would be useful to publish in the future, it is worth mentioning that part of this project's success was due to the huge network that developed as a result of the campaign. This allowed the project to be disseminated faster, gaining media attention in a relatively short period of time.

Shortly following the publication of the book, a shipment containing 400 copies was confiscated in Alexandria by Egyptian authorities for allegedly 'inciting violence.' This was later announced as a misunderstanding by authorities

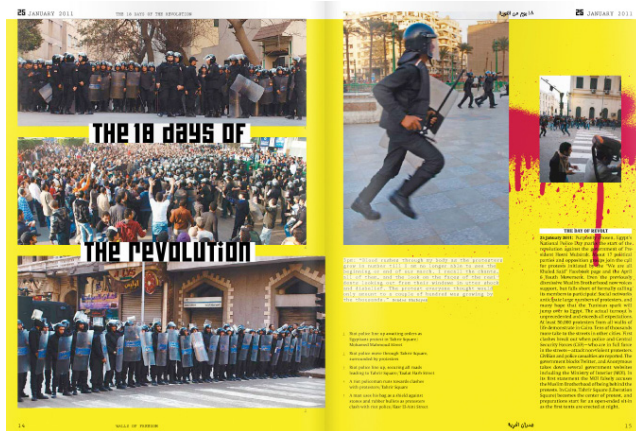


Figure 5 and 6 Two Spreads from the book showing the structure of the timeline, quotations, captions and short texts and how they vary stylistically to ensure clarity for the reader. For a more detailed live preview, see: http://issuu.com/fhtf/docs/wof_teaser

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1.7.2 Financial and political implications:

The book's time/content expansion caused financial constraints resulting in the launch of a successful crowd-funding campaign in June 2013, which raised 186% of the initial requested budget. Crowd-funding is now a viable solution to research projects that cannot obtain sufficient funding from grant awarding organizations. However, it is a fairly new and developing practice, particularly in the visual arts and humanities disciplines. While there were many serious issues

with our crowd-funding experience that would be useful to publish in the future, it is worth mentioning that part of this project's success was due to the huge network that developed as a result of the campaign. This allowed the project to be disseminated faster, gaining media attention in a relatively short period of time.

Shortly following the publication of the book, a shipment containing 400 copies was confiscated in Alexandria by Egyptian authorities for allegedly 'inciting violence.' This was later announced as a misunderstanding by authorities in Egypt, since the censors had already approved the book. However, despite authorities promising the book's release, the case remains pending and the books are still in custody. In an atmosphere of diminishing civil rights and mass arrests it is important to consider the implications of a project produced during a severely unstable period in a country's history. The circumstances under which the book was developed has changed dramatically, at that time the revolution was accepted and celebrated by most Egyptians, today the revolution is considered a setback and its revolutionaries have been sentenced to years in prison. In an extreme twist of events, in early May 2015, four graffiti artists were arrested by security forces and detained for 12 hours after painting a decorative mural. After being interrogated by the police they were finally released. Thus, it remains an important indication of the status of freedom of expression in Egypt, reflects on the future of our project, and serves as a reminder of the unpredictability of researching in an unstable political and social environment.

1.8 Conclusion:

Visual media has long been a key element to ethnographic research. In a visual project where unraveling historical, political and social implications are crucial to the research, iconological interpretation should be a priority and can be achieved through archiving, tagging, and meticulously mapping the visual and verbal sources in order to produce a multi-faceted and holistic outcome. Less synthetic and more reflexive research can be achieved through understanding the subjectivities of researchers and including participants as collaborators in the research project. Furthermore, virtual or social media ethnography is also an important method that could provide valuable outcomes to research topics that have a strong online presence. Ethical considerations such

as shifting political circumstances, consent, and ownership should be considered in order to ensure that participants or collaborators are not harmed and fully understand their involvement in a given project. In volatile social and political circumstances a project may shift dramatically in content or validity – creating new meanings and implications for the researchers and the participants.

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The hands behind the cans

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Abstract

Nowadays, walking around any city is a guarantee of seeing graffiti, while the public transportation are still a good canvas for writers. It is a well-established social phenomenon and has catch the attention of ethnographers, academic artists and other scholars that have entered the worlds of graffiti writers to explain their origins, trajectories, motivations, their identity construction, their conception of the self and their role and relation with society at large. However, still there is no synthetic effort of categorisation that provides understandable and communicable approaches to graffiti in the real world.

From some sectors graffiti is still something to “deal with”. Generally speaking, authorities and dutyholders consider graffiti as threat a security and safety issue, turning it into something that needs to be addressed. For social workers, for instance, graffiti can be a means of communication with certain youth sectors or even a tool for social cohesion generation.

Departing from this perspective, Graffolution was designed: an EC funded project for generating awareness and advance in the provision of best practices for tackling graffiti in Austria, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. The first rule encountered is no-one-size-fits-all and referring to graffiti and graffiti writers, this requires a complex understanding of the phenomenon, their trajectories as well as individual and collective dispositions.

The aim of this paper is to provide a consistent typology of graffiti writers, offering a comprehensive picture of whose are the hands behind the graffiti cans. This serves a double level purpose: advancing at the theoretical level putting forward the socio-cultural approaches to careers and social backgrounds provided by ethnographic approaches, as well as capturing the complexity of the phenomenon to serve as an operative conceptual basis for practitioners, professionals and decision makers.

In doing so, the analysis is made on the transcripts obtained for 22 semi-structured interviews, carried out in the four participating countries. The transcripts have been analysed according to the “persona” methodology, which constitutes a systematic and novel approach and a qualitative technique for clustering information. As a result, three main categories have been defined according to important ambitions, challenges and stages of typical ‘journeys’ or ‘pathways’ of actors. These findings contribute to form a basis of a) highlight the misconceptions around graffiti as a petty crime, and b) offer a guide to understand graffiti writers under a socio-cultural perspective.

Keywords: graffiti writers, qualitative methods, persona methodology, typology

Introduction

Grffiti was born in deprived areas of New York in the 70s (Castleman 1984; Miller 2002) and was established in Europe starting in the late 70s in the UK and spreading to other countries at uneven pace in the 80s. There was a subculture where Graffiti was born, due to the inequalities that minorities were living in that moment and their needs for protest. Graffiti was not only the act of painting a subway, it belonged to the Hip Hop movement: “Rapping and breaking became the prime expressions of a new young people’s subculture called ‘hip-hop’. Graffiti is the written word. There is the spoken word of rap music... (rap music playing) and then there’s the acrobatic body language of dances like “bre-

aking” (Silver and Chalfant 1983; “Style Wars” 1983).

Referring to the literature a basic definition of graffiti can be made by its description as “...visual perceptible elements (...), that vary in their colour selection, size and complexity and are often attached unsolicited at places that are well visible” (Steinat 2007).

Nowadays, walking around any city is a guarantee of seeing graffiti, while the public transportation are still a good canvas for writers. It is a well-established social phenomenon (Berti 2010; Alderton 2013). However, from some sectors graffiti is still something to “deal with”. Generally speaking, authorities and dutyholders consider graffiti as threat a security and safety issue, turning it into something that needs to be address-

sed. For social workers, for instance, graffiti can be a means of communication with certain youth sectors or even a tool for social cohesion generation (Gamman 2011; Rahn 2002). Under this perspective, Graffolution was born: an EC funded project for generating awareness and advance in the provision of best practices for tackling graffiti. The first rule encountered is no-one-size-fits-all and referring to graffiti and graffiti writers, requires a complex understanding of the phenomenon, the trajectories as well as individual and collective dispositions (Graffolution 2014b). This paper is based on the knowledge generated during the first year.

The aim of this paper is to provide a consistent typology of graffiti writers, offering a comprehensive picture of whose are the hands behind the graffiti cans. This serves a double level purpose: advancing at the theoretical level putting forward the socio-cultural approaches to careers and social backgrounds provided by ethnographic approaches, as well as capturing the complexity of the phenomenon to serve as an operative conceptual basis for practitioners, professionals and decision makers.

In doing so, the analysis is made on the transcripts obtained for 22 semi-structured interviews, carried out in Austria, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. Their speeches are analysed according to the “persona” methodology, which constitutes a systematic approach and a qualitative technique for clustering information. As a result, three main categories have been defined according to important ambitions, challenges and stages of typical ‘journeys’ or ‘pathways’ of actors. These findings contribute a basis to a) highlight the misconceptions around graffiti as a petty crime, and b) offer a guide to understand graffiti writers under a socio-cultural perspective.

Graffiti and graffiti writers: the state of the art

Graffiti has been evolving since the very beginning and three main phases can be contemplated in graffiti history, corresponding to major graffiti scene changes and milestones (Graffolution 2014b). The first phase corresponds to graffiti writing – both in the urban and transport facilities- appearance, in New York City during the 70’s and spreads through mass media into Europe in the late 70’s beginning of the 80’s. In general terms, by the end of the 80’s decade authorities and public institutions start to define graffiti writing as a problematic issue in public spaces (Carr 2005). However, by the beginning of 1990 a graffiti industry starts to grow and roots in developed countries which will lead to graffiti writing democratization in that it will become an (economically)

affordable practice (Krammer 2012).

There is a turning point in the evolution of graffiti in the 1990s. First, parallel to the massive commercialization of Hip-Hop, graffiti became established all across Europe. In parallel, some authors identify that particularly during the 1990s multiple forms of hip hop culture, including music, fashion, graffiti and more, started to become co-opted into more mainstream UK popular cultures and began to appear within advertising and commercial outputs as well as increasing adoption by different youth cultures (Turco and Ismaili 2013; Willis 2006). This followed activities also emerging from the USA in the late 1980s, which, as Paul Willis argues, reflected novel stage in capitalism with ‘new forms of accumulation based on a kind of symbolic anti-capitalism, taking its cues from the streets, stealing semiotically from already economically dispossessed and deprived communities’ (Willis 2006).

With the turn of the century street art enters the frame (Christian Hundertmark 2005), thus not considered graffiti these two practices can share tools and spaces, creating new dynamics into the urban artistic intervention field and the appropriation of public space (Hughes 2009). The criminalisation of graffiti and the phenomenon of street art are both extended phenomena that will be addressed in the following sections.

Criminalisation of graffiti

Shortly after its spread, graffiti is also listed within the potential factors that lead to fear of crime in public spaces such as being drunk in public, making noise, and littering as well as robbery, car theft and burglary (Breetzke and Pearson 2014; Gray, Jackson, and Farrall 2008). This recognises graffiti as a visible “signal of risk” (Innes 2004). This also leads to graffiti or other anti-social behaviours’ potential to encourage further anti-social activities. This leads to a significant point: concern of crime, feeling of insecurity and fear are the products of social construction of the crime (Innes, 2004). Accordingly, the perception of security and insecurity depend on a) the view of individuals, b) where the graffiti is observed, and c) what kind of graffiti is observed (Arudo 2003; Breetzke and Pearson 2014; Johnson 2011; Kirchner 2014).

‘Graffiti’ and ‘graffiti vandalism’ are often used as synonyms in the reviewed literature (Association for European Transport 2004; Cultural Studies Essay 2013). Interestingly, those actors with a duty of paid responsibility towards graffiti prevention or removal appears to be those who use the term ‘graffiti vandalism’ the most. Especially law enforcement and

associations/organisations acting against graffiti vandalism tend to strongly point out the negative effects that are said to be connected to graffiti such as gang-problems, raising feelings of insecurity and leading to further criminal activities (Feldes et al. 2003; Gray, Jackson, and Farrall 2008; Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg 2008; McGovern 2013) though some of the claims are ambiguously substantiated, or not at all.

Austin & Sanders stress that variables such as gender, race, age, prior victimization, social integration, and perceptions of increasing crime rates have all been shown to impact attitudes concerning safety in local neighbourhoods, and whether particular instances of graffiti are seen to act negatively, neutrally or positively (Austin and Sanders 2007).

Grffiti is also seen as defacing of public or private property without the owner's permission and considered as criminal damage (Islington Borough Council, London 2014). On the other hand, graffiti writers argue that what they recognise as "culture" or "creativity" is recognised as crime such as damage to private property (Colt 45 2010). Respectively, (Iveson 2009) suggests that the conflict of graffiti lies in the definition of the problem itself, which can only be overcome by developing a common interest definition.

Several authors (Jacobson and Kirby 2012; Spicer 2007); describe graffiti as typical youth crime and anti-social behaviour. Additionally, some categorise graffiti as a symptom of 'youth delinquency' as a whole (Geason and Wilson 1990; Landeskriminalamt NRW 2006). Theories of vandalism link graffiti vandalism to youth delinquency and The Youth Action Bulletin briefly describes negative effects of vandalism and graffiti vandalism.

However, and despite this image of an ungovernable activity, the literature reveals some of the key don'ts: writing on houses of worship, people's houses, other writer's names, tombstones, memorial walls and cars as well as involving civilians in one's practice. The excerpt reflects, as opposed to what some may suggest graffiti writing is not without rules and should not be considered as an uncontrollable phenomenon. As Berti aptly points: "Graffiti writers are depicted as if they were the bringers of conflict to public space, a ubiquitous shadow threatening the normal development of the City as a uniformed place, coherent and in harmony" (Berti 2010, 20).

The rise of Street Art and the new meanings of Graffiti

As mentioned above, since the turn of the century and the new conceptions of graffiti (and probably due to the appearance of the street art phenomenon) different approaches beyond the criminalisation have been possible. The best

example is the pro-social models of graffiti. Pro-social models categorise graffiti related activities through constructive contributions to society in cultural, social, economic and political terms (Graffolution 2014a; Graffolution 2014b). In many instances, sources reviewed choose to use the term 'street art' as well as, or in effort to distinguish from, (possibly negative) associations with graffiti or graffiti vandalism. However, it is clear that there is much cross-over between street art and graffiti practices and practitioners.

Ferrell already describes graffiti as a form of resistance which can be interpreted as social construction rather than destruction, and which may or may not constitute vandalism, dependant on multiple factors in parallel with legal status (Ferrell 1993). It is widely discussed that the line between legitimate and illegitimate images is far less defined than is assumed. This is further considered in Hayward's report of Ask Bristol, showing the difference between the perceptions on graffiti pieces or murals (much more identified with vandal graffiti) and street art (Hayward, Carol 2006). Besides, public perceptions of graffiti do not always align with the categorisation of graffiti as vandalism. So it depends on who is looking at it and which are their duties on graffiti their relationship with the area or the surface sprayed and their understanding (Graffolution 2014a).

The advent of this new "urban art" form that conquers the street instead of the walls of a museum, opens the door to graffiti as a commodity. During the last decade graffiti has been consolidated as a consumer product, and has multiple times been reported a market good (Molnar 2011). Doubtlessly, for the lay public is not the same a graffiti writer than a street artist. Being both terms ambiguous and generic, the connotations for the former recall vandalism, while for the latter are tied to vanguard movements (Graffolution 2014a). Again, this is also based on general perceptions and it is easier to measure the "offenders prosecuted" than those participating or promoting pro-social activities related to graffiti. In Europe, it is uncertain the number of graffiti that are made every day or how many graffiti writers are trained. Indeed, there are no official statistics on graffiti that can be compared and graffiti is considered among many other things as vandalism and petty crimes: data on graffiti is often in a sort of hotchpotch or mixture of minor crimes (Graffolution 2014a). Consequently, the impact of graffiti is mainly built on criminal records and perceptions of dutyholders than on reliable and representative data. It is therefore impossible to heft the phenomenon.

But whose are the hands behind the cans? As graffiti history is generally well-known and has catch great attention, this

paper proposes a typology for a better understanding about the hands behind the (spray) cans and their urges, motives, aspirations and conditions. Splitting from the criminalization paradigm based on the “broken windows theory” (Thompson 2012; WA Police 2014) and combining the contributions about graffiti and writers made under the socio-cultural approaches (Castleman 1984; Lachmann 1988; Macdonald 2002; Miller 2002; Rahn 2002; Shannon 2003; Snyder 2009) is the opportunity to synthesize the heterogeneity avoiding excessive simplifications.

The portrait(s) of graffiti writer(s)

Graffiti writers have been long pictured as teens with assertive needs struggling to reinforce their identities though tagging, can in hand, hiding under a hood. Institutions and public administration have reproduced this conceptualization of the graffiti writers in policy matters. This has had repercussion in the academic field, an important proportion of the current graffiti analysis and literature on graffiti writers stem from crime prevention strategies and criminalist theorization (Graffolution 2014a). Defining graffiti as a problem has also led to restrictive and prosecution solutions. There is prosecution and interest in socially constructing the idea of “organized criminals”, as news usually reflects (see Rivas 2013). Despite the general perceptions, the sources reviewed make clear that graffiti writers and their activities are certainly not all the same and most change forms of intervention in public space and transport (including destructive and constructive interventions) and approaches over time (Bannister 2013; Cullinane 2011; Haworth, Bruce, and Iveson 2013; Lewisohn 2011; McAuliffe 2013; Neelon 2003; Stik 2011). This problematizes policies and modes of categorisation which group graffiti or graffiti vandalism activities and other crimes into mixed classifications - for example Keizer et al.(2008) on broken windows theory, or on criminal damage (HM Government, UK 1971). Graffiti practitioners also experiment with making different legal and illegal works simultaneously and develop their practice according to situation, context, opportunity, political and cultural trends and spend time finding and evolving their own ‘styles’ or ‘approaches’ (Clarke 1978; Cullinane 2011; Gamman and Willcocks 2009; Meredith 2013; Woodward 2009).

Data and methods

Quantitative and comprehensive data on graffiti and graffiti writers is practically inexistent and incomparable. There are no official statistics and beyond ethnographies (Shannon 2003), the best source are the records gathered by du-

tyholders and law enforcement agencies. For this reason, the Graffolution consortium decided to apply qualitative techniques to gather information, in form of semi-structured interviews to different stakeholders and dutyholders. The countries surveyed are Austria, Germany, Spain and the UK. Graffolution is the first project that “sits all parties around the same table” at the same level, asking exactly the same issues and topics to all of them. This offers a multi-faceted view on the graffiti phenomenon. However, for the sake of consistency in this paper only the interviews concerning graffiti writers will be discussed. First because this is the group of interest for this paper as it is the most urgent change in the mind-set that needs to be done. Second, due to time and space constraints the authors have preferred to explain the persona methodology in detail for graffiti writers only. The rest of this section covers the data gathering process, the sample and the mechanics of the persona methodology.

Gathering data: in-depth interviews with stakeholders:

Semi-structured interviews were based on one commonly agreed interview guideline, used for all stakeholders, including graffiti writers. The guideline covered the following topics: understanding/definition of graffiti, relationship to graffiti, experiences/motifs, impact, the legal framework, prevention strategies/measures, exchange/networking, outlook/future approaches and needs towards graffiti.

For the project, 85 in-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders from public and state authorities, police and law enforcement agencies, transport operators, organisations from the social and cultural domain of graffiti, as well as graffiti writers (according to age, socioeconomic status and gender). All interviewees were chosen due to their experience about graffiti in their country. When possible, key players were invited. In general terms, the success rate of participants is close to 25% of those contacted.

In total 22 graffiti writers were interviewed in the four countries. To reach them, the snowball procedure was deemed the better method. First because using personal contacts was easier as graffiti writers are not as contactable as others, and second, due to the mutual trust needed in order to engage a criminalised group in a research. Accordingly, the limitations of the sample are caused by the bias on our personal contacts and the rejection of the project on behalf of certain profiles of graffiti writers (those more used to illegal practices).

The persona methodology

An important part of the work within the analysis has been

the integration and refinement of a methodology to define and visualise ‘personas’ to help distil the most important characteristics, among different graffiti writers and other actors related to graffiti. The development and application of the design-informed-processes to achieve this was led by Willcocks, Toylan and Thorpe (2015), from the team at University of the Arts London (UAL) who first delivered this work. Within the Graffolution project, this aimed to benefit and/or influence the effectiveness of responses, escaping from the one-size-fits-all approaches and measures for prevention and awareness generation. For the purpose of this paper, this is the initial stage for understanding the complexity of graffiti writers.

The creation of the research-informed personas, and visualisation of some key characteristics, has been instrumental in facilitating the visualisation of important ambitions, challenges and stages of typical ‘journeys’ or ‘pathways’ of writers which could reveal opportunities for different approaches, that might inform decision makers of any kind. The persona methodology is based on an iterative process departing from a spreadsheet for the systematization of codes previously applied with Atlas.ti (for further details see Graffolution 2015). The process applied is described and visualised here in Figure 1.

These personas were then compared to identify common and unique personas and persona characteristics, in order

PERSONA METHODOLOGY (28th October, 2014)
Guide to derive personas from interviews

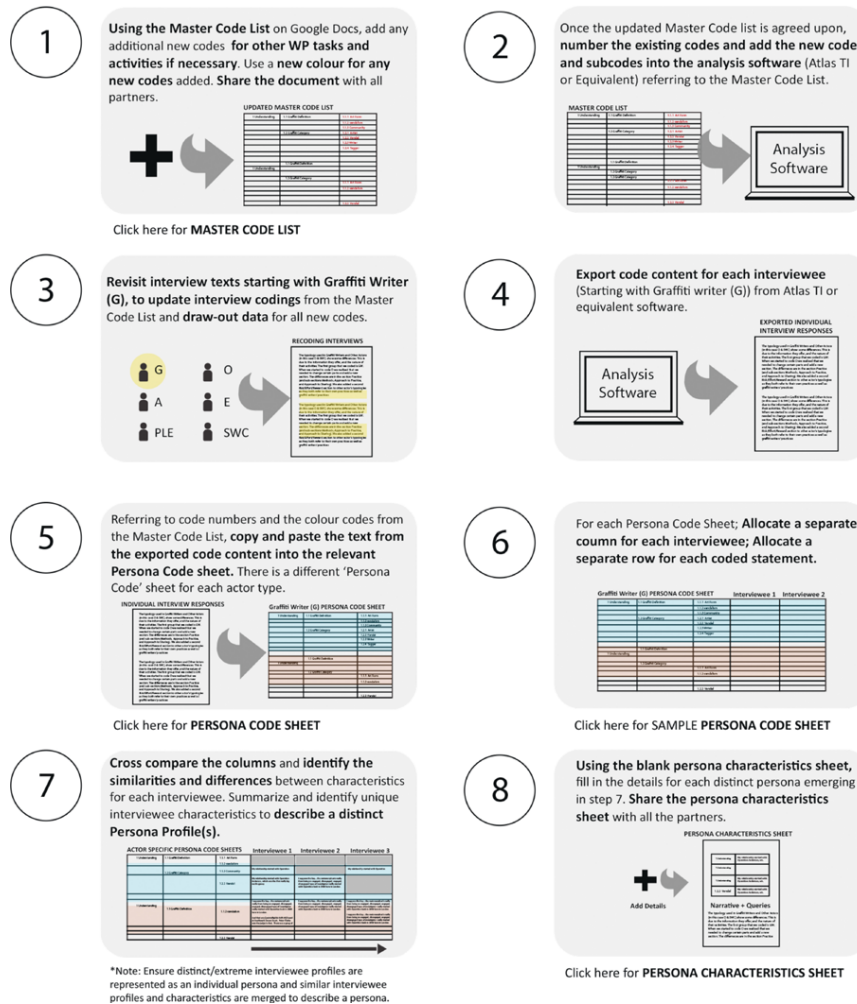


Figure 1. First graffiti persona identification methodology. Annotated illustration of how Graffolution research-informed sets of personas were established. UAL (Graffolution, 2015).

to generate a set of personas that are representative of the different types of actor as defined through the 22 interviews and 300+ literature sources consulted.

In order to make Persona data quickly and easily accessible, key characteristics for the distinct personas developed were represented as visualised persona sheets. These reflect attributes including persona motivations in regard to graffiti, their likely levels of agency, their respective personal ambitions, what they want to see more of and less of, particularly in contexts of public areas and transport. 'Touch points' and opportunities to use the Graffolution platform for existing and potential designed 'devices' relevant to the persona are also illustrated (e.g. a persona who checks his/her smart phone for emails and calendar updates on the way to work).

Results and discussion

One of the very early findings was already during the recruiting process. When approaching almost any graffiti writer their reluctance and distrust regarding the project and the convenience of collaborating with a project where duty holders (mainly transport operators and PLEAs) were also present, was a pattern to be considered. Generally speaking, their willingness to contribute was associated to their closeness to legal practices of graffiti. Those aligned with pro-social aspects of graffiti or self-considered artists were more willing to participate.

All of the interviewees are - or have been - highly active in graffiti writing. Besides this common feature, there are differences concerning the duration, intensity and special field of their engagement. Some of the graffiti writers are part of the illegal graffiti scene, while others turned to legal graffiti writing or other forms of engagement like for example building up a graffiti gallery or a graffiti shop. Despite that, the interviewees differ according to their age (younger and older writers), economic status (lower and higher), gender (male and female writers) as well as their location (from smaller towns to major cities).

The development for the countries surveyed differs. As graffiti was born in New York subways, the spreading channel was mass media more than direct contact, particularly in those countries not belonging to the Anglo-Saxon culture. According to the interviewees, the UK was the first country to adopt this form of social protest in the late 70s, followed by Austria and Germany. In Spain, due to the existence of a dictatorship until 1975, the phenomenon of graffiti arrived in the mid-1980s.

From the graffiti writers' point of views, there is no universal definition of graffiti, as they all have their different styles

and ways to engage in graffiti. But there are several aspects, where the interviewed writers from all countries agree with. At first, for the writers, graffiti is more than a picture or a name on a wall.

For a fourth of them graffiti is more than a practice of writing, is a life-style or mentality. For another 26% it is a risky game, related to adrenaline rush and excitement (particularly for those painting illegal). The ego factor is present among the 22% that define graffiti as a way to get recognition and to have a voice via a simple message "I was here" (particular to tags). It is also important the aspect of the immortalization of their work and themselves. In relation to the previous one but more focused on them, 14% of the interviewees consider graffiti as platform for self-expression and self-exploration, a way to connect with their artistic expression needs. Next to its self-affirming and identity-establishing function, graffiti also provides the possibility to become a part of an "exclusive" community – especially for those who see graffiti as a way of life and mentality rather than just a practice. Almost a 10% live graffiti as an addiction and a minor proportion consider it a social phenomenon (4,5%).

But it is important to point out that their relationship towards graffiti and therefore also their self-understanding as a writer can't be seen as something static but changes over time. The interviews reveal that the evolution and progression of a graffiti writers practice is acknowledged in some cases as a career and depending on the perspective as an "artistic career" or a "criminal career". In these instances whether actors are referring to a 'career' positively or negatively, it shows that some graffiti writers are dedicated and motivated to embark on a journey of learning and development be that legal or illegal. The majority of the writers quit their illegal activities when they're entering adult life or at least turn to legal forms. Out of this changed feeling can develop a simple rejection of graffiti or also an engagement in other fields of the phenomenon like doing commissioned work, publishing or writing for a scene magazine, providing workshops, etc. so that the changed attitude towards illegal graffiti does not automatically mean the "loss of the identity as a part of the graffiti scene", although some might be "less obsessed with graffiti".

Grffiti often plays an outstanding role in the process of creating identity, both individually and collectively. For the writers, graffiti is understood both as an individual and group activity in terms of appearance, spaces, time of dedication, reasons, and commitment to a broader subculture. All the interviewees started with tags when they were adolescents or before their twenties.

The stereotype of graffiti writer is linked to the image of a young man with hood and a spray can in his hand. Different forms of social sorting (including discrimination and labelling) towards young people observed have been observed. However, this is more a perception than reality according to numbers: as aforementioned, while tag is a particular activity that is mainly a teenager activity, graffiti goes beyond early adulthood and more girls and women are joining the scene. Oldest graffiti writers interviewed mainly have the understanding that graffiti is an important way (especially for young people but not limited to them) to express own feelings, transport messages and opinions.

Referring to the social background of the writers, a general classification seems to be difficult as graffiti writers belong to every social class, although it is possible to identify focuses. In Spain, it seems that those dedicated to graffiti are from poorer and middle-classes. In Germany the majority of the writers cannot be located to the under- but to the middle- and upper class. In the UK and Austria the boundaries are less clear and are more a polarized phenomenon.

Initially graffiti writers were males, and the graffiti scene is living a process of feminization and the proportion of girls and women has increased since its consolidation. Early adopters of graffiti were mainly boys, while the female early adopters came a little bit later and now are experimenting a high increase, particularly in street art. However, it was difficult to interview women for the project. One of the few that accepted to participate pointed out that “is hard for a woman to enter the scene and to be accepted by the males”. In addition it was mentioned that there also appeared aggressive reactions to works of females only because of the fact that it was done by a woman or a girl but not because of the skills or other characteristics (e.g. words like “whore” painted on graffiti of a female writer). According to the interviewees, such cir-

stances may of course discourage female writers early in their writer “career”, although it is important to bear in mind that this is a male’s perception.

Most of the writers don’t see their behaviour as anti-social. As it was stated by German sprayers, for them graffiti is something they do for themselves but not against others or at least for the reason to get attention (GG2). Further mentioned aspects are that graffiti also provides the possibility to escape from society and their daily world. And although the writers know that what they do is basically rejected by society the common sense of the interviews was that it isn’t their purpose to act against society but to live out their passion which includes some sort of conflict with society. Besides, it is worth mentioning that some of the graffiti writers who were reluctant to participate in the project highlighted that by naming the project “Graffolution” it was departing from the idea that there is some “problem” with graffiti, while they feel that there is no problem with that. In particular, one of them told us “we just paint, we do not kill anyone”.

The persona analysis

Beyond any regional cultural, social, historical etc. differences, the personas work to reflect personal features which repeatedly proved to surface as common and significant among different graffiti related interviewees, and which proved notably different in other cases. After the whole iteration process, three main trends or profiles were found. The organisation of the personas is made around their social and demographic background, their relationship with graffiti (background, practice, risk & efforts), their view on legal practice and prevention and future vision. According to these criteria, three persona profiles have been found and are described below.

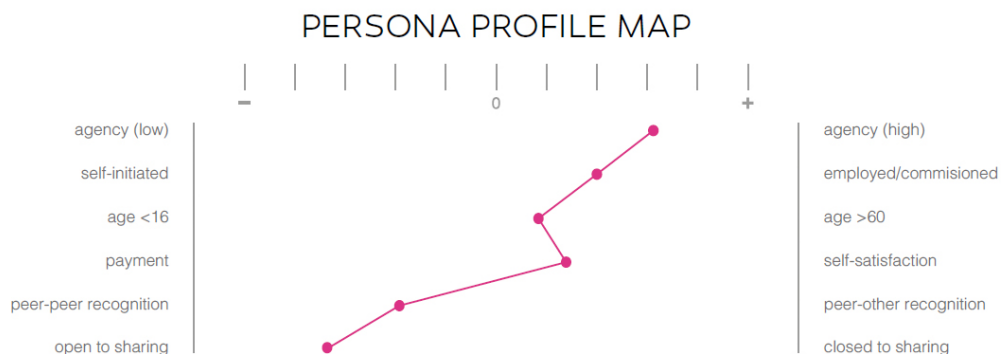


Figure 2: Persona 1 - Mark, 35, Artist. Toylan, UAL (Graffolution, 2015).

Persona 1: Mark, 35, artist.

Mark would correspond to an average married man aged 35, who started in graffiti with some random tagging, an activity they would do as a group. Quite soon he was interested in its artistic value, being his expression and that of the others. He remembers the rush of graffiti painting, considers it an effective way of communication and helps to engage a community. He is now dedicated to canvas.

According to Figure 2, he has a relatively high agency (capacity), and generally paints employed or commissioned (rather than self-initiated). He does it for self-satisfaction more than payment and seeks peer-other recognition. He wants the world to know his talent and consequently, he is open to sharing.

In the future, Mark would like to see more legal walls provi-

ded for artists to practice, network and share their skills. He would also like to see some changes in the law to accommodate graffiti artists who have great talent and skill and decriminalise them. Along with this, he asks for less policing and would recommend to authorities to evaluate the artworks before wiping them down.

Persona 2: Eva, 26, Designer + Artist

Eva would be a freelance designer interested in travelling, culture and art. Eva could have started with friends (later forming part of a crew), probably doing stencil and always trying to paint legal. She has always been aware of the legality and she now is no longer part of a crew. Only paints murals for specific causes.

According to figure 3, she has an average capacity (agency), always works under employment or doing commissioned

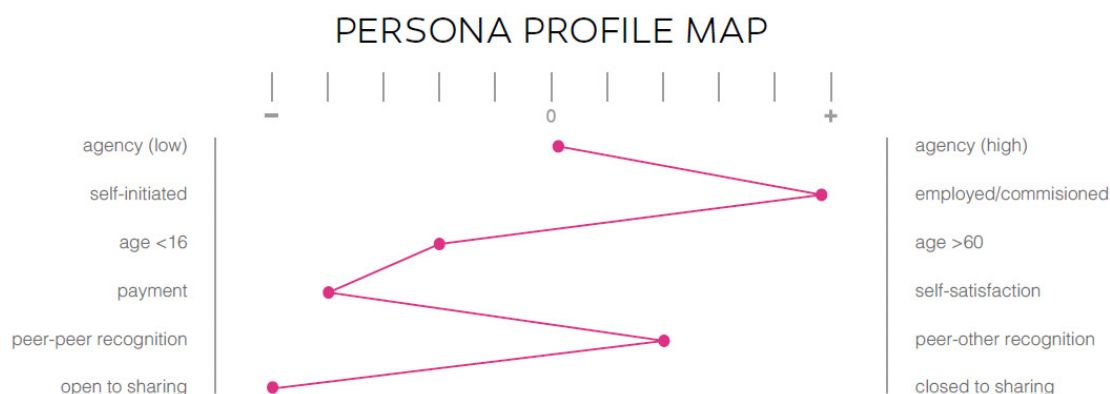


Figure 3: Persona 2 - Eva, 26, Designer + Artist. Toyman, UAL (rfol2015).

graffiti as a way of earning a living, personal recognition is not the most important element but she wants her job to be appreciated and she is totally open to sharing practices.

Eva supports the rise of street art communities, and would like to see more people appreciating the social value of graffiti and its positive impacts. She has the impression that people can be more connected to the city through graffiti.

In the future she would like to see less people vandalising public property. She also believes that providing people with more accessible spaces will reduce risk factors to a large extent. She would extremely recommend substituting fines and imprisonment by training, as a way to develop the artistic skills and reduce vandalism.

Persona 3: Mr X, 15, graffiti writer

This persona is the most similar to the imaginary described in the literature and the public perception. Is a sixteen year-old boy. As a kid he was drawing anywhere, on any surface he could find. He belongs to a crew, skip lessons at school as are uninteresting and spend their leisure time planning the next wall to paint.

He started to do graffiti influenced by his friends and due to the rush and adrenaline it brings. He started tagging after school to kill boredom. He tries to improve his style every day and spends a lot of time looking at others' graffiti.

As figure 4 shows, Mr X has a relatively higher agency than Eva and lower than Mar. His graffiti are always self-initiated and done for self-satisfaction. He rarely gets paid for this.

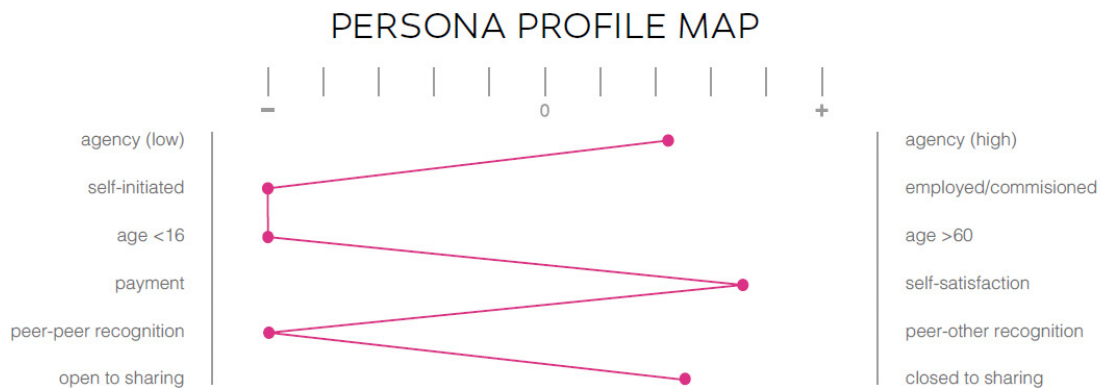


Figure 4: Persona 3 - Mr X. 15, Graffiti writer. UAL (Graffolution, 2015)

The aim is self-recognition and peer-to-peer recognition. The crew is fundamental and he holds the more closed position to sharing.

In the near future he would like to see cities flooded with graffiti. He feels that lots of people are scared due to prosecution, and it is necessary that they gather and share their strategies to avoid being caught. He feels that legal spaces would never work as sites of graffiti, he would never use them, just because several times contests and other activities have been used to catch graffiti writers.

Conclusions

Beyond the criminology approaches and the ethnographic incursions, the main strands of analysis of Graffolution include the progressive feminization of the graffiti scene, the approximation of graffiti to the high culture and the impact the public conceptualization of graffiti has had in the development of graffiti history. Graffiti is a social phenomenon and all social changes are also echoing in the graffiti scene. Through this analysis other topics arise, among them the demystification of graffiti as a juvenile act and furthermore, the analysis of the commodification process of urban expressions.

Focusing on the socio-cultural aspects of the phenomenon graffiti, the research so far brings up that it is quite difficult to give a general definition of graffiti, but not because of larger differences between the researched countries, but because of the heterogeneous points of view that vary with the way the respective person comes in contact with graffiti. But it gets clear that a description of these “visual elements” often

revolves around the two questions concerning their artistic value and the legality of the attachment. However, it seems that writers who are more active in street art and less involved in vandalism incidents come from higher social and educational groups.

As heterogeneous as the different definitions of graffiti are, as varying are also the backgrounds of the writers. Giving a common threat, it can be stated that graffiti is mostly – but not exclusively – a youth phenomenon. In general graffiti writing is taken up by young people in their teens. Thereby the status as a writer can't be seen as something static but as a sort of biography that develops with the stages of the writer's life and can include a more artistic or professional approach and a turn towards legal forms of graffiti as the time goes by, but also a general denial of graffiti or even some sort of criminal career.

There is a general agreement in all researched countries, that the large majority of them are male. And although it is stated that females slightly start to engage more in graffiti, it seems that girls and young women are generally less attracted – So beside the teenagers and pre adults, there is also a hard core of older writers that is firmly established in the graffiti scene. Along with their experience mostly goes a more professional and sometimes even work-related relationship towards graffiti.

To reduce the complexity and gain in comprehension, the persona analysis has been performed. It is based on interviews and allocating the different participants according

to key criteria such as their social and demographic background, their relationship with graffiti (background, practice, risk & efforts), their view on legal practice and prevention and future vision. As a result three main profiles have been found: Mark, the artist (35); Eva (26) the designer and artist, pro-legal walls and Mr X. (15) the traditional profile of graffiti writer. These three profiles could be seen as three main trends and representative roles within the current graffiti scene. This exploratory typology shows how biased is to keep applying criminalist and unified approaches when referring to those writing graffiti in one or other form. The myth has a portion of reality, but a part cannot be taken as the whole.

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Unfolding Spaces of My Memory: Female Migration through Audio

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Abstract

This article focuses on the possibilities of using the audio walk as a method for artistic research. First, the decisive characteristics of the format will be outlined, followed by a detailed description of an example case: my artistic research project that focuses on the subject of female migration. Several elements of the audio walk were used in a series of exercises with a group of recently migrated women, with the intention of investigating how the perception of the city is determined by their specific experience. This example case will be used as a means of pointing out several possibilities and opening up a space to think of the audio walk as a way of presenting a work but also as a way of generating knowledge as well.

Keywords: Audio walk, perception, walking, artistic research, gender, migration, sound art

Introduction

While walking down the streets of any given city, all of our senses collaborate in order to produce our perception as a whole. Additionally, this perception is influenced by our past experiences: Setting the body in motion through space, we gain access to our memories and past sensations. Therefore, taking a walk is simultaneously a way to create and a way to access a type of knowledge that has been stored not only in the invisible confines of the mind, but also in the materiality of the body. Experience and memory are thus also forms of embodied knowledge.

As an artist, I am interested in gaining access to this embodied type of knowledge by using the audio walk as an artistic strategy and creating mediated situations that operate at the intersection of the body's subjectivity and its surroundings. In the audio walk, narrating voices, field recordings, music and sound effects are combined to an audio piece especially created for a certain site – or a type of location. The location is not understood as one fixed point but rather as a series of points connected to each other by a line that must be traversed. Portable media players and headphones enable a mobile reception throughout the walk. While the other senses are not interfered with, an additional layer of privatized sound is added to the ears. The participant's movements are then synchronized with the environment by instructions or a rhythm defined in the audio track.

It is precisely the correspondence between the person, the content of the audio and the location that creates an impacting experience for the participant of the audio walk. First evoking images in the participant's imagination and then directing the attention to the surrounding, the experience is marked by the contrasting use of impulses that intensify introspective and extroverted forms of engagement with the work. This is precisely where I recognize this artistic format's potential as a method for artistic research. In addition to posing the questions common to many audio walks: 'What are the qualities and specific aspects of this space? What narratives are possible and intrinsic to it?' I want to ask: 'Who is this person and how does she experience the world around her? How do her prior experiences influence the perception of her surroundings and how is this manifested?'

This article focuses on the possibilities of using the audio walk as a method for artistic research. First, the decisive characteristics of the format will be outlined, followed by a detailed description of an example case: my artistic research project that focuses on the subject of female migration. Several elements of the audio walk were used in a series of exercises with a group of recently migrated women, with the intention of investigating how the perception of the city is determined by their specific experience. This example case will be used as a means of pointing out several possibilities

and opening up a space to think of the audio walk as a way of presenting a work but also as a way of generating knowledge as well.

1. Audio Walks: A Mobile Strategy to Reveal, Overwrite and Interact

In her article “Mediated Listening Paths: Breaking the Auditory Bubble” Elena Biserna describes three tactics commonly used by artists working with sound- and audio walks to engage in a relationship between participant and environment through a mediated experience: revealing, overwriting and interacting.

The works coined under the term “revealing” have a quality of evoking attributes- such as sounds, rhythms and noises - that are inherent to a space and yet faint or hidden, while the focus of the projects that run under the term “interacting” is the performance made visible in urban space by the actions of the participants themselves. The third tactic of overwriting adds an artificial layer of experienced reality:

“Many projects overwrite the environment by superimposing a narrative acoustic time-space over the physical one. By doing so, they “dramatize” everyday reality immersing the walker in urban adventures, in cinematic experiences on the move, or in a multiplicity of stories, testimonials and interpersonal traces (...) returning a fragmented and manifold “image” of the city.”¹

The projects described by Biserna contain a narrative that is often closed in itself, using the audio walk as a format to “present” it to an audience. A narrating voice that addresses the participants individually is a common element within these works, but the questions posed do not call for an answer. Mostly, the para-social interaction ² is used to trigger the imagination, activating an introspective process and therefore immersing the participant even deeper into the experience. The feeling of closeness and intimacy is created only to intensify the illusion of physical cinema. Thus, the format is mostly unidirectional – it regards the individual as a physically involved spectator-participant, a receptacle for the artistic production.

1.1. Research Method: Audio Walks as a Way of Knowing and Showing

Dwight Conquergood suggests that we can think of perfor-

mance along three “crisscrossing lines of activity and analysis”³. In this sense, performance can be perceived:

- (1) As a work of imagination
- (2) As a pragmatics of inquiry
- (3) As a tactics of intervention

In my practical-based research project, I intend to draw together precisely these three points: Create audio walks and experiments (1) as a means of reflecting upon (2) and revealing (3) the specific quality of the female migrants’ perception of the city upon arrival. Using audio walk as my research method, I combine the techniques of walking through a specific environment while listening to a pre-produced or pre-recorded audio piece over headphones as a means of emphasizing the subjectivity of this relational experience that is both embodied and situated.

Rather than “solely” showing an art work that is meant to be experienced by physically engaging with it, I am interested in the knowledge that can be generated in and through it. Instead of giving answers, directions and instructions, the audio walk can also question and reflect on the experience in itself. The narrating voice can be introduced as a facilitator, an interviewer almost, while the “soundtrack to reality”⁴ can be utilized as a possibility of creating contrasting situations, opposing the original soundscape. Furthermore, by opening up a space for discussion and analysis of the work, a bidirectional process is set off that sheds a light on the thoughts and questions that were provoked.

1.2. Migration as an Embodied Experience

In her book “Strange Encounters: Embodied others in Post-Coloniality” Sara Ahmed describes the experience of inhabiting a particular space as an embodied one:

“The immersion of a self in a locality is not simply about inhabiting an already constituted space (from which one could depart and remain the same). Rather, the locality intrudes into the senses: it defines what one smells, hears, touches, feels, remembers. The lived experience of being-at-home hence involves the enveloping of subjects in a space which is not simply outside them: being-at-home suggests that the subject and space leak into each other, inhabit each other.”⁵

According to the author, the sensorial perception of a loca-

tion forms a unit that is wrapped around the subject like a second, permeable skin. In a similar way, the audio enters - intrudes - the body through the ears and the “auditory bubble”, created by sound listened to over headphones, similarly envelopes the body. Just as the second skin described by Ahmed, the audio is layered over the sounds of the environment. Precisely by operating at this intersection between body and location, the audio functions as mediator and enquires on how these two elements impact and re-inhabit each other.

Especially during a period of transition, in which the new location is still unexplored and unfamiliar to the immigrant, this second skin does not feel quite that comfortable yet, it expands and contracts in a process that Ahmed describes as the irritation of an itch ⁶. The impressions of the location one previously recognized as the place of being-at-home are still very present, so that the physical sense of moving through space is enough to trigger a memory of another place. This is also what motivated me to work with a group of women that had recently arrived to live in a new country. I was interested in exploring the “discomfort” felt on the level of the second skin as a very productive moment of self-awareness and instability. For this purpose, I appropriated Ahmed’s questions into my artistic research: How do bodies re-inhabit space? And how do spaces re-inhabit bodies?

1.3. Gender and Migration

Both the research areas of feminist geography and that of feminist migration studies deal with the subject of women’s subjugation to patriarchal limitations on the self, which often include the restriction of women’s mobility in the city. These study areas have made it their pursuit to identify and expose the power relations embedded in, shaped through, and reinforced by migrants’ bodies in particular places and across space ⁷. Space and place are described as being gendered and sexed, and gender relations and sexuality in turn as ‘spaced’⁸. The experience of migration is thus embodied and gendered as well.

“In transnational contexts, the most financially and politically powerful migrants tend to be either explicitly or implicitly masculinized, such that in the literature on transnationalism, women are alternatively taken to be truants from globalized economic webs, stereotyped as subservient or victimized, or relegated to playing supporting roles, usually in the domestic sphere. ⁹“

Through my artistic research, , I intend to investigate and revert this image by working with a group of female migrants in public space, taking them beyond the places usually circumscribed as the domain of female action. By making them the main protagonists and direct collaborators of my experiments, I also want to portray women that present a different kind of power than the one usually attributed to women in the context of migration – independent, autonomous and engaged with the world and surroundings.

2. Artistic Research: Exercises

2.1. The Participants

After defining that I would work with a group of women that had recently arrived to live in the city of Cologne on their own, a short call was written and sent out. The only pre-requisites posed were that their arrival date in Germany should not exceed six months and that they would be comfortable to communicate in English.

A group formed after a month, consisting of 13 women. Their ages ranging between 20 and 35 years, the biggest percentage was from Spain, two women from China, and one respectively from Italy, Georgia, Mexico and Australia. At that time, none of them knew how long they would be staying in Germany. The main motivating factors that drove the women to answer to the call were curiosity, the possibility of sharing their own experiences with others and a personal interest in the subject of migration. And precisely this open, explorative spirit marked our meetings and the exchange between the different participants.

Setup and Structure of the Exercises

As a basis for the exercises, I established three different fields of action that would be approached consecutively:

- 1) Sensitize and enhance the (aural) perception of the city
- 2) Evoke personal memories of other places and past experiences
- 3) Connect experiences of the present (here and now) with the past (then and there)

The exercises were conducted using a series of tools: bin-aural microphones, audio recording devices (digital and analogue), headphones, maps and portable media players

that were prepared especially for each experiment they were used in. This allowed me a freedom and spontaneity to respond to the impulses provided by the participants. Also, I have been working with my own voice for some time now, using it as a means to connect with the audience. This was also a recurrent element in the exercises, especially in the audio pieces that I created for the proposed situations.

Seeking a more reduced and minimalistic approach to the exercises, a special attention was given to the rigor of their concept and content, as well as to the script.

2.2. Exercises

2.2.1. Sensitizing and enhancing one's perception of the surrounding

The first meeting of the group was focused on exercises to sensitize and enhance the women's attention to their surroundings, with a special emphasis on the city's soundscape and walking through a neighborhood they had never been to.

First, we went out for a silent walk in the neighborhood. This exercise was carried out with the intention of sensitizing the participants towards their auditory perception of the environment.

The second exercise involved listening to several recordings indoors: field recordings of certain locations throughout the city. They listened to all of the tracks over the course of an hour, some of which had been made with binaural microphones¹⁰ while walking through a location and others were static recordings of a certain spot on a site.

We had a group discussion directly after both experiences. For many of the women, to listen with great attention while walking through the neighborhood posed a new and entirely different concept. Later, they reported a shift in attention during routine daily actions, in which they seemed to notice the sounds that surrounded them more actively and with curiosity.

The reactions to the second part of the experiment were varied, depending on how much of the city the participants already knew. If the soundscapes could not be attributed to a specific site, they would evoke very lively images of places and situations that they knew from the past - As if completing the soundscape through images drawn from memories of other places that could just as well correspond to these

sounds.

This last aspect seemed of great interest to me, since audio walks often work the other way around: The audio on the headphones adds a separate layer that enhances and complements the currently experienced environment. So the current perception as a whole is "augmented" through the artificial sounds and the imagination is projected onto the surroundings, transforming it for the audio walk participant. But what if the sounds do not correspond to the currently experienced environment? What if they negate and contradict the current perception, creating a productive tension in the spectator-participant? These questions led me to develop the second set of experiments using the method of translocation.

2.2.2. Translocations or Exercises in Schizophrenia

The term schizophrenia was coined by R. Murray Schafer¹¹ to describe a state in which what the person hears doesn't correspond to what she is perceiving with the other senses, creating a disruption, a feeling that something is "off" and that the senses cannot be trusted anymore. Even though this is a rather familiar phenomenon in most parts of western culture, where it is common to listen to music on portable devices while being anywhere, the music can also be substituted with binaural recordings of a different space, creating a completely different experience.

Night Walk in the Park

The exercise within the second category turned out to be a less pleasant experience for some of the participants. A route was chosen inside a park in Cologne and I recorded a walk I took during the day using binaural microphones. You could hear many people interacting and a lot of movement through the environment: children, adults, dogs and bicycles.

We met in front of the park at night. The track recorded during the day was given to them with no further instruction other than the route and the affirmation that the park was safe - as I knew both from extensive self-experience and research. Equipped with headphones and a portable device, the women started walking with a distance of one minute set apart from each other. The 15 minute long route took them through parts of the urban park that were dark and others that were well lit.

After they returned, the reactions differed a lot from each other: While most of them seemed relieved that the tour was over, some were more relaxed than others. One woman's reaction stood out among all of them. She was infuriated and immediately proceeded to describe her experience and explain the reasons for her reaction: During the first months of 2015 there had been a high number of attacks on women in Australia, her country of origin. A few of the murdered women had been found in parks. These informations were very present in her mind at the moment she entered the park for the exercise. The next 15 minutes were then a torturous experience to her, since all of the sounds from the recorded track that appeared to originate around her seemed threatening.

Not being able to trust her senses, she felt both terrorized and helpless. The auditive sense, which would otherwise help her in the dark and unfamiliar environment, was now "obstructed" by the headphones. Her memory was filled with gruesome images and details from the news that influenced her imagination and resulted in the feeling of extreme discomfort while being in the park at night. A child's name being called out by the father would have been an unremarkable situation in the park during the day, but in the dark environment, it became a somewhat ghostly presence filled with the threat of imminent tragedy.

Both she and others stressed the fact that they felt very disoriented and at times "as if going mad". When I introduced the term "schizophonia" at the end of our discussion, they could relate very well to the term and stated that they had felt exactly that: a disconnection between the direct experience and the auditive sense, which was aggravated by the darkness.

In retrospect, it would have been easy to guess the impact of the experiment in the park beforehand. But at the same time, it was very interesting to observe that specific knowledge and the emotional connection to the country of origin could make the experience differ so much. In contrast to all the others, the Australian participant was much more sensitive and vulnerable towards the experience. Her subjective, individual experience was strongly influenced by the empathy and fears that were currently being projected in her home country. Maybe the fact that she lives in Germany stressed

these facts even more, since loved ones could potentially fall victim to these crimes while she was away.

In the park, the harmless sounds of human interaction acquire a sombre tone when played back at the same location at night. Apart from the schizophrenic quality of the experience, the darkness brings out many components intrinsic to the space and triggers the imagination, which is strongly connected to individual experiences. By choosing a location associated with a current wave of crime in a specific country made the international context of this group and its local differences more explicit.

2.2.3. Disappearing Act: An Audio Walk for airports

Within the last "category" of experiments, I developed an audio walk for the space in which most of the women had first arrived to live in the city of Cologne: the airport. As the non-place¹² par excellence, this space intrigued me by its ability to appear so sterile and impersonal and yet to be connected to people's personal lives and therefore holding a strong emotional value to many.

I created an alternative map to the airport based on its original, in which I named the different spaces according to the human activities taking place in it. As a next step, an audio piece was created for each area. In the tracks, I mixed voice recordings with music and sound effects. The audio had a high level of self-referentiality: Many questions regarding their own experience of migration and travel were included, as well as a philosophical and metaphoric description of the areas and their specific functionality. A few autobiographical elements were added as well, an intersection between their and my own experience of migration.

Though we arrived at the airport as a group, each participant took the audio walk by herself, the tracks had a different order for each one of them. During the 20 minutes, they walked from one section of the airport to the next while listening to the audio tracks over their headphones.

To return to this space with the sole purpose of exploring it, gave them the room to unfold the spaces of their memory. While walking, observing, thinking, the experience of remembering became an embodied one. The site-specific audio tracks used at each location intensified the experience even more. While the other senses were kept "unobstructed", the

auditive one directed both their gaze, pace and thought in a most subtle way. It revealed integral qualities of the location and brought them together with the personal, subjective experience of the participants. The audio walk intensified a process that could be called “embodied remembering”.

After the walk had ended, we met again for a group discussion that revealed that both the audio walk and the memories left a strong impression on all of the participants. Very quickly, the conversations became more and more about the personal experience of migration and the pleasures, challenges and uncertainties connected to it. The discussion gave them the opportunity to share their thoughts with people that have gone through a comparable experience and to discover the differences and many similarities.

2.2.4. Soundscape of Treasured Memories

As a second experiment within this third category, I asked each one of the women what sounds or soundscapes have an emotional connection to their hometown and/ or family and friends. The idea behind this was to create a bridge between the present yet unfamiliar city and the familiar yet absent sounds of the past by adding the latter to the first on the acoustic level, while walking through an unfamiliar environment. I created a soundscape collaging the situations they had described and they listened to it subsequently while walking through the streets of the city of Cologne.

Collected list of sounds and soundscapes:

1. Signal horns of cars.
2. Twittering of the swallows in the spring as they return back from the south.
3. The sound of “Dulzaina” it a typical wind instrument.
4. The sound of a high-pitched female voice speaking loudly, reminds me a lot my mother.
5. Background noise of a distant sports field with shouts and cheers, cars driving slowly by.
6. The noise of lots of people talking, drinking coffee etc in a shopping centre.
7. The sound of the ocean and the waves.
8. It's the wind, the dog barking, meowing cats and rooster kikiriki in the early morning.

...

But the result was quite contrary to what I had expected. To them, it was difficult to relate the sounds and the envi-

ronment through which they walked. And instead of evoking memories and emotions, the memory most present to them was that of when they had thought about and informed me of the sounds. Listening to the soundscape became a game of recognizing “their” chosen sounds and verifying my attempt of sonically representing their description. So the memory was overwritten or complemented by the newer information created within the project in itself. As a form of palimpsest, the newer set of memories had overwritten the older ones.

And this is also how many of the exercises worked: The memories evoked during the experiments were also complemented by the memory of the experience in itself, as in a process of constant writing and re-writing of the space. Precisely this idea is one important realization that came through this series of experiments: Both memory and the experience of a space – being it on the auditory level or as a whole – are extremely subjective and malleable, changing quickly over time.

3. Conclusion

Returning to the analogy of the environment as a second skin, and to the idea of the second skin of a migrant “not fitting properly” (of it being too tight or uncomfortable and creating an itch), my goal was to constructively work with what is stirred up during this specific period of time in the life of the migrants and inquire: How does this process express itself in their perception and how do present and past experiences of spaces impregnate each other?

Developing and undertaking the exercises was a productive way of learning about the subjective perception of the spaces that currently surround this group of women. Through this, I was also able to understand how spaces can have a different impact on different people. But the most interesting part was, to me, that this knowledge was first accessed on an embodied level before turning into cognitive, intellectual facts. And to be able to weave in my artistic skills into a series of exercises that are of artistic value – as performances - and simultaneously creating something that goes beyond the aesthetic experience of an art work.

The exercises that I carried out represent only a fraction of how audio walks can be used as a method of artistic research. Both the arts and other fields – geography, architecture and social sciences for example – can profit from

the possibilities that this mediated experience can provide. Walking and listening become a performative way of exploration of the environment and especially of investigating the relationship/ perception/ reaction of the person participating in it, achieving an embodied type of knowledge instead of a solely intellectual one.

Repeating Sara Ahmed's words, space and subject leak into each other, inhabit each other. The same is true with the audio: it permeates the body and environment, flows from one into the other seamlessly. It can enhance the multi-sensory experience of the subject moving through a specific surrounding by amplifying and/or overlaying the local soundscape with different sounds. Or even create an irritation by replacing it with an apparently incongruous soundscape.

It is possible to use music, field recordings, narrating voices and sound effects in a great variety of combinations and with the aim of addressing an endless number of topics. Especially when combined with the subjective perception of a human being, the audio walk presents the opportunity to trigger and to intensify the process of experiencing and remembering while walking through a specific space.

For as *Eirini Nedelkopoulou* states on audio walks: "(...) *the spectatorial body is the very medium whereby the mixed-media world comes to completion.*"¹³ So why not use this mixed-media world as a way of accessing information on the subject inhabiting both this body and the world?

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1 - Biserna, E. (2015). "Mediated Listening Paths: Breaking the Auditory Bubble." *Wi: Journal of Mobile Media* 9(2).

2 - Horton, D. a. W., R. (1956). "Mass Communication and Para-social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance." *Psychiatry* 19: 215-229.

3 - Conquergood, D. (2002). "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research." *The Drama Review* 46(2): 145-156.

4 - The term was coined by Walther Siegfried in the title of some of his works.

5 - Ahmed, S. (2000). *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. London, Taylor & Francis.

6 - *ibid.*

7 - Silvey, R. (2008). *Borders, Embodiment, and Mobility: Feminist Migration Studies in Geography. A Companion to Feminist Geography*. J. S. Lise Nelson, John Wiley and Sons.

8 - McDowell, L. (1999). *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Minneapolis, Wiley. Page 85.

9 - Pratt, G. a. Y., B. (2003). "Transnational (counter) topographies." *Gender, Place and Culture* 10(2): 159-166.

10 - Binaural recording is a method in which two microphones are used to achieve a 3-d stereo sound sensation for the listener. It is intended to be replayed using headphones and will not translate well over stereo speakers.

11 - Schafer, R. M. (1969). *The new soundscape: a handbook for the modern music teacher*, BMI Canada.

12 - As coined by Marc Augé in: *Non-Lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*. Le Seuil, Paris 1992.

13 - Nedelkopoulou, E. (2011). "Walking Out on Our Bodies Participation as ecstasis in Janet Cardiff's Walks." *Performance Research* 16(4): 117-123. Page 122.

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Street art conservation: The drift of abandonment

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Abstract

There is a need to create a documentation system adapted to facilitate the conservation and restoration of Street Art and Graffiti. Even though they are ephemeral manifestations of art, there have been some signs of the need for preservation mechanisms that would respect their own special features. For selected works we must establish a procedure that enables their preservation with the highest guarantee.

Keywords: Conservation, Restoration, Preservation, Preventative.

Introduction

Street Art, as well as Graffiti, are artistic expressions of the twentieth century – two different visions of the use of the public space with one shared reality: their abandonment in the streets. Both are also defined by the same maxim: think, create, act and forget. This provides them with an ephemeral nature. The main reason for this is that they belong to nobody; moreover, no one is responsible for their continued existence in the long term. However, some of these works not only survive but also become known, and cease to be anonymous, which means a significant change in their recognition, turning them into a consumer good. In fact, artists themselves should take into consideration that their works may ultimately be preserved.

1. Street Art Conservation

It is a fact that some of the most widely known works are already being preserved. One of the most famous examples is Banksy's Rat. Banksy is an artist who has left a great number of works that could be used to analyze and to change these casual drifts of abandoned art. In this specific case, a non-profit organization – Save the Banksy – was created in San Francisco, Utry to avoid the loss of, as well as the economic trade of those works doomed to disappear or to be the subject of speculation (Greif, 2015).

The reasons that lead us to analyze the opportunities we have to preserve street art are based on, in some cases, those works that are being ripped from the walls to be sold

or auctioned; and in other cases, as with a mural by Fairey in Philadelphia, those works that have been restored by the wall's owner – a decision based on personal taste. Moreover, in the case of the graffiti Muelle (Figuroa and Galvez, 2004) in Montera Street, Madrid, for which protection as cultural property was requested, there was already some previous recognition of the artist, given the fact that he has been a point of cultural reference ever since the beginning of graffiti in Spain during the complicated first years of democracy immediately after the dictatorship.

Nevertheless, in the vast majority of cases, street art and graffiti works are preserved by chance. This is the reason that whatever happens to these works can be defined as the drift of abandoned art, for which new and unknown expectations are being raised in a changing society. There is a new challenge in the conservation and restoration field nowadays: on the one hand, there is an ethical consideration which is in altering the ephemeral nature of works done in that they may survive in a hostile environment; and on the other hand, there is the need for further research and on the trend of modern materials applied on walls that are already degraded even before the artistic intervention.

The analysis of the different solutions that have been carried out to date will build formulas that will give to some of the works the opportunity to be subject to interventions in a will make them retard their aging process. After studying some of the better known cases, this has resulted in the need to

establish a methodology to work with and to implement a respectful strategy adjusted to the specific needs of street art conservation.

2. Identity alteration

When works are intervened with and preserved, they might suffer changes, for their identity may also be altered – the illegal works become recognized, and the ephemeral works become long-lasting. Furthermore, all of these works may end up being digitalized and available on the internet, and their authors may become recognized. This usually happens arbitrarily except for the big murals that are often commissioned works; the murals' identity would not be altered since their recognition has already started as part of the curating system.

In some of the cases though, these changes are abruptly done as when the works are stolen or auctioned, as with Banksy's works, turning them into fetish objects.

3. Restored works

Perhaps the most interesting interventions are the conservation treatments done on three of murals by Haring: one in Pisa, Italy, another one in Melbourne, Australia, and the third one in Barcelona, Spain. These could be used as reference cases since, in less than two years, they have drawn international attention due to their restoration. In the Spanish case, in Barcelona, the work was revived thanks to a tracing completed by MACBA, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, before it was completely removed in the 1990s. In the other two cases, mechanical and chemical cleaning was needed, including the final anti-graffiti protection. However, this technique's effectiveness had to be checked, since graffiti has been done over the restored mural.

Placing methacrylate plates is another widespread technique that paradoxically creates the opposite effect – turning it into a watertight compartment for the paint, and favoring the emergence of microorganisms, in what ends up being an irreversible treatment.

The disassembly of the walls or the ripping of the paint layer alone requires the creation of new supports that can make murals into portable works. Let us take the works that have been ripped from the walls in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as an example. In contrast to the old murals, these were not taken as works attached to the architecture; moreover,

they have been placed in despised architectural spaces.

4. Street Art as Cultural Property: Resources to detect works that should be preserved

Artworks carry values difficult to define [Muñoz Viñas 2004: 41]. They are important for particular groups of people and their value is sometimes intangible. It is not easy to decide which works should be preserved, due to the fact that this is a popular type of art and therefore many of these works are already part of the collective memory, independently of the values that have been traditionally considered important. Some markers should be put in place by which people could request the preservation of the works done in their community. Furthermore, a more complex documentation system than photography alone must be set up – this system should be able to give out information on the conservation status of the walls and the materials. From this point, we could establish a basic methodology designed to assist the preventative conservation of these works. Some of these actions could involve the previous treatments of the walls with a moisture protection; using an ultraviolet protective finish action; a simple correction of water falling due to runoff; or selecting the facades according to how protected they are from the sunlight. As commissioned murals are becoming more and more common as part of street art tourism, a control system for aging speed and loss of color must be created.

A preventative conservation program and a system for technical and complete documentation would facilitate the development and dissemination of this evidence base – not only of the reasons for the survival of the works but also of what connects them to their environment; reasons that go beyond chance.

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Derwanz, H., 2013. *Street Artists. Careers on the Art and Design Markets*

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Abstract

In her book "*Street Artists. Careers on the Art and Design Markets*" Heike Derwanz traces back the careers of three different street artists: Banksy, Shepard Fairey and No Logo/Jens Besser. She addresses questions of self-professionalization and conceptualizes street art as both an art historical and social phenomenon. She asks: How do careers of street artists evolve and under which circumstances are they successful? By outlining a transnational network of the so called 'street art world' she finally discusses the phenomenon on the basis of four different social spaces: the street, the media, and the art and design market.

Keywords: Street Art, Art and Design Markets, Visual Anthropology, Multi-Sited Ethnography, Visual Culture

In her book "*Street Artists. Careers on the Art and Design Markets*" Heike Derwanz traces back the careers of three different street artists: Banksy, Shepard Fairey and No Logo/Jens Besser. She asks, how do careers of street artists evolve and under which circumstances are they successful? And additionally, how do street artists become producers of the art and design markets?

By 'career' Derwanz refers to a sequence of specific steps that have to be taken in order to succeed professionally. In doing so, she provides a pure analysis of the situation instead of falling into the somehow common and negatively connoted trap of the sell-out debate.

Derwanz offers new scientific findings within the field of artistic professionalization of street artists by applying new methodological approaches and conceptual patterns: relevant actors, things, topics and situations are not only unfolded, but put in relation with each other. With reference to the American sociologist Howard S. Becker the author highlights: "Art is collective action" (Derwanz, 2013: 199). Nevertheless she points out: "Every career and every network is unique; there is no 'manual' and no tenure track" (Derwanz, 2013: 12). With this in mind, Derwanz agrees with the argument put forward by US-American artist Dan Witz who defines social integration as one of the main factors and central categories in obtaining a successful career. By paying close attention to the material's own demand for dynamic, Derwanz outlines a transnational network of the so called 'street art world' which she – subsequently – discusses on the basis of four different social spaces: the street, 'the' media (in the sense of communication media, like magazines,


fanzines, books, films and the internet), the art market and the design market.

In the light of familiar art forms – like graffiti, graffiti art and pop art – Derwanz conclusively situates the street art phenomenon within art history. She discusses if and where street artists can prospectively position themselves and maintain a substantial presence within contemporary art discourse. The book closes with a so called 'career manual' which reflects street art careers on the basis of visual culture.

With her book "*Street Artists. Careers on the Art and Design Markets*" Heike Derwanz offers an extensive study of the art historical phenomenon of street art, situated around the turn of the millennium. The book is optimized with the aim of finding a deliberate balance between research topic, academic aspiration and the anticipation of heterogeneous recipients like street art-enthusiasts and people situated within the street art 'scene'. Specific value lies in the multidimensional point of view which draws together different categories like production, representation, socialization, contextualization, marketing and expansion. On the one hand, her study is particularly characterized by an extensive scientific expertise. On the other hand, it offers individual passages that provide creative freedom for 'further thoughts' and interpretation. Here it is particularly worthwhile to read between the lines.

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Research concerning street art & urban creativity assumes quite different methodologies according to the scientific background of the researchers and the scientific area it is being developed.

As there is still no consensus regarding a methodological approach towards such issues and in the aftermath of the first international conference regarding street art & urban creativity, this issue brings forward the insight of several researchers on their own methodological approaches towards this thematic.

Seminar quantitative report:

198 inscriptions; 12 nationalities present; PT; ES; IT; DE; GE; SW; UK; USA; AU; FR; DN;
22 speakers (8 keynotes, 10 delegates, 2 members of executive commission);
2 venues in Historical Lisbon center (Fine Arts Faculty and Mouraria Creative Hub) ;

Journal (Volume 1) quantitative report:

64 received abstracts
31 full articles received
15 accepted articles without changes
12 accepted articles with changes

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Street Art & Urban Creativity
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