

Street Art and Intangible Heritage: a contextualising approach to public art in Vitoria-Gasteiz

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Note: This paper was selected for the 3rd. Aesthetic Energy of the City International Seminar. University of Lodz. October 2018, and reviewed for publication in February 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1344/waterfront2019.61.6.6>

Abstract

This paper presents the results of ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz, capital of the Basque country, between the 4th and the 8th of December 2017. In the last decade, Vitoria-Gasteiz has become internationally known thanks to its urban gallery of public mural art. The murals of Vitoria-Gasteiz, in fact, were one of the main attractions of the city when it got the recognition of European Green Capital in 2012.¹ They started being produced by the IMVG project in 2007 on the same basis of sustainability as the general agenda of the city. This cultural agenda became a world-class reference in the field of cultural heritage studies, management and the archaeology of architecture thanks to the project Abierto por Obras (Open for works) that integrated sustainability within the research and development processes of excavating, restoring, repairing, consolidating, documenting and

1.- European Commission, n.d.. '2012- Vitoria-Gasteiz'. Environment. European Green Capital. (retrieved online, <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/winning-cities/2012-vitoria-gasteiz/>, 24-11-2018)



exhibiting the Gothic cathedral of St. Mary through cultural interpretation.² That program became an example of good practice recognized internationally and attracting people such as Ken Follet, who presented *A World without End*, his sequel to *The Pillars of Earth*, in the building.³ The emphasis on sustainability makes the IMVG an exceptional case-study within the current Street Art world, where normally expressions tend to be more ephemeral. One of the most singular aspects of the IMVG is its working methods based on community practice, social engagement and public participation.⁴ The combination of these particular features makes the IMVG an exceptional case in the Iberian peninsula, where many Street Art festivals and projects developed quickly and produced large pieces of public mural art in parallel to the IMVG since the 2000s.

Keywords:

ethnographic fieldwork; Vitoria-Gasteiz; Basque country; European Green Capital; IMVG project; Open for works project; Ken Follet; sustainability; community practice; social engagement; public participation; Street Art; urban gallery; mural art

Resumen

Este documento presenta los resultados del trabajo de campo etnográfico realizado en la ciudad de Vitoria-Gasteiz, capital del País Vasco, entre el 4 y el 8 de diciembre de 2017. En la última década, Vitoria-Gasteiz se ha hecho internacionalmente conocida gracias a su Galería de arte mural público. Los murales de Vitoria-Gasteiz, de hecho, fueron uno de los principales atractivos de la ciudad cuando obtuvieron el reconocimiento de la Capital Verde Europea en 2012⁵. Comenzaron a ser producidos por el proyecto IMVG en 2007 sobre la misma base de sostenibilidad que el general. Agenda de la ciudad. Esta agenda cultural se convirtió en una referencia de clase mundial en el campo de los estudios de patrimonio cultural, la gestión y la arqueología de la arquitectura gracias al proyecto Abierto por Obras que integraba la sostenibilidad en los procesos de investigación y desarrollo de excavación, restauración, reparación, consolidando, documentando y exponiendo la catedral gótica de Santa María a través de la interpretación cultural⁶. Ese programa se convirtió en un ejemplo de buenas prácticas reconocidas internacionalmente y que atraía a personas como Ken Follet, quien presentó *Un mundo sin fin*, su secuela de *Los pilares de la Tierra*, en el edificio⁷. El énfasis en la sostenibilidad hace que el IMVG sea un caso de estudio excepcional dentro del mundo actual de Street Art, donde normalmente las expresiones tienden a ser más efímeras. Uno de los aspectos más singulares del IMVG son sus métodos de trabajo basados en la práctica comunitaria, el compromiso social y la participación pública⁸. La combinación de estas características particulares hace que el IMVG sea un caso excepcional en la península ibérica, donde muchos festivales y proyectos de arte callejero se

- 2.- Azkárate, A., Cámara, L., Lasagabaster, J. I. and Latorre, P., 1998. Catedral de Santa María, Vitoria-Gasteiz. Plan Director de Restauración. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Diputación Foral de Álava (Retrieved online, <https://issuu.com/catedralvitoria.com/docs/www.catedralvitoria.com>, 24-11-2018); <https://www.catedralvitoria.eus/es/abierto-por-obras/>
- 3.- Fundación Catedral Santa María, 2008. 'Ken Follet presents World Without End at the Santa María Cathedral'. Notas de prensa. Catedral de Santa María- Katedrala Santa María (retrieved online, <https://www.catedralvitoria.eus/en/current/1486/ken-follett-presents-world-without-end-at-the-sant>, 24-11-2018)
- 4.- Werckmeister, V., 2014. A Case Study in Monumental Contemporary Muralism: Creating landmarks, creating together. In: Soares Neves, P. and Freitas Simoes, D. (eds.), Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity. Lisbon: 2014
- 5.- European Commission, n.d.. '2012- Vitoria-Gasteiz'. Environment. European Green Capital. (retrieved online, <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/winning-cities/2012-vitoria-gasteiz/>, 24-11-2018)
- 6.- Azkárate, A., Cámara, L., Lasagabaster, J. I. and Latorre, P., 1998. Catedral de Santa María, Vitoria-Gasteiz. Plan Director de Restauración. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Diputación Foral de Álava (Retrieved online, <https://issuu.com/catedralvitoria.com/docs/www.catedralvitoria.com>, 24-11-2018); <https://www.catedralvitoria.eus/es/abierto-por-obras/>
- 7.- Fundación Catedral Santa María, 2008. 'Ken Follet presents World Without End at the Santa María Cathedral'. Notas de prensa. Catedral de Santa María- Katedrala Santa María (retrieved online, <https://www.catedralvitoria.eus/en/current/1486/ken-follett-presents-world-without-end-at-the-sant>, 24-11-2018)
- 8.- Werckmeister, V., 2014. A Case Study in Monumental Contemporary Muralism: Creating landmarks, creating together. In: Soares Neves, P. and Freitas Simoes, D. (eds.), Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity. Lisbon: 2014

desarrollaron rápidamente y produjeron grandes piezas de arte mural público en paralelo al IMVG desde la década de 2000.

Palabras clave:

trabajo de campo etnográfico; Vitoria-Gasteiz; País Vasco; Capital Verde Europea; Proyecto IMVG; Proyecto Open for Works; Ken Follet; sustentabilidad práctica comunitaria; compromiso social; participación pública; Arte callejero; galería urbana; arte mural

Resum

Aquest article presenta els resultats del treball de camp etnogràfic dut a terme a la ciutat de Vitòria-Gasteiz, capital del País Basc, entre el 4 i el 8 de desembre de 2017. A la darrera dècada, Vitòria-Gasteiz és coneguda internacionalment gràcies a la seva urbanització. galeria de l'art mural mural públic. Els murals de Vitòria-Gasteiz, de fet, van ser un dels principals atractius de la ciutat quan va obtenir el reconeixement de la Capital Verda Europea el 2012⁹. Van començar a ser produïts pel projecte IMVG el 2007 sobre les mateixes bases de la sostenibilitat que el general agenda de la ciutat. Aquesta agenda cultural es va convertir en un referent de primer ordre en el camp dels estudis sobre patrimoni cultural, gestió i arqueologia de l'arquitectura gràcies al projecte Abierto por Obras que va integrar la sostenibilitat en els processos de recerca i desenvolupament de l'excavació, restauració, reparació, consolidant, documentant i exposant la catedral gòtica de Santa Maria mitjançant la interpretació cultural¹⁰. Aquest programa es va convertir en un exemple de bones pràctiques reconegudes internacionalment i atraient gent com Ken Follet, que va presentar A World without End, la seva seqüela de The Pillars of Earth, a l'edifici¹¹. L'èmfasi en la sostenibilitat fa que l'IMVG sigui un cas excepcional en el món actual de l'art de carrer, on normalment les expressions solen ser més efímeres. Un dels aspectes més singulars de l'IMVG són els seus mètodes de treball basats en la pràctica comunitària, la participació social i la participació pública¹². La combinació d'aquestes particularitats fa que l'IMVG sigui un cas excepcional a la península Ibèrica, on molts festivals i projectes de Street Art es desenvolupen ràpidament i produeixen grans peces murals públiques en paral·lel a l'IMVG des dels anys 2000.

Paraules clau:

treball de camp etnogràfic; Vitòria-Gasteiz; País Basc; Capital verda europea; Projecte IMVG; Projecte Open for Works; Ken Follet; sostenibilitat; pràctica comunitària; compromís social; participació pública; Art de carrer; galeria urbana; art mural

9.- European Comission, n.d.. '2012- Vitoria-Gasteiz'. Environment. European Green Capital. (retrieved online, <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/winning-cities/2012-vitoria-gasteiz/>, 24-11-2018)

10.- Azkárate, A., Cámara, L., Lasagabaster, J. I. and Latorre, P., 1998. *Catedral de Santa María, Vitoria-Gasteiz. Plan Director de Restauración*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Diputación Foral de Álava (Retrieved online, <https://issuu.com/catedralvitoria.com/docs/www.catedralvitoria.com>, 24-11-2018); <https://www.catedralvitoria.eus/es/abierto-por-obras/>

11.- Fundación Catedral Santa María, 2008. 'Ken Follet presents World Without End at the Santa María Cathedral'. Notas de prensa. Catedral de Santa María- Katedrala Santa María (retrieved online, <https://www.catedralvitoria.eus/en/current/1486/ken-follett-presents-world-without-end-at-the-sant>, 24-11-2018)

12.- Werckmeister, V., 2014. A Case Study in Monumental Contemporary Muralism: Creating landmarks, creating together. In: Soares Neves, P. and Freitas Simoes, D. (eds.), Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity. Lisbon: 2014

From the beginning, the person in charge of the IMVG has been Veronica Werckmeister. She initiated her interest in public muralism at the Social Public Art Resource Center (Los Angeles, CA) and then went on to work on several projects with the Chicago Public Art Group (CPAG),¹³ which was one of the most important organizations in the rising of Street Art in the United States.¹⁴ Their work was widely referenced in Sommer's seminal study on the phenomenon, the book *Street Art*, in 1975. The CPAG was founded five years before in 1970 by John Pitman Weber and William Walker under the name Chicago Mural Group (CMG) and remains active to this day. In fact, John Pitman Weber took part in one of the murals of the IMVG in 2010.¹⁵ The training of Veronica Werckmeister at the CPAG is crucial to understand the dynamics of her artistic processes in Vitoria-Gasteiz, where she has been directing many projects in collaboration with her sister Christina since 2005. All these artists are part of a movement that spread during the 1970s in the United States,¹⁶ the Contemporary Mural Art Movement, which is a clear trend within Street Art.¹⁷

However, the roots of this movement can be traced back to the Mexican Mural Art Renaissance, especially to David Alfaro Siqueiros, as their theorists themselves stated.¹⁸ Siqueiros was a pioneer in incorporating the public space of street into the creative processes for the innovative works he produced and theorized within a well-established art discourse in 1934 in Los Angeles, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires.¹⁹ They led him to experiment with new materials and to incorporate the street context as well as other factors that scholars have considered to be defining in the creative processes of current Street Art practice.²⁰ Between the 1930s and the mural art revival of the 1970s, there is little information within the art establishment which does not correspond with empirical evidence, in the sense that mural art did not stop being produced at the street.²¹ During that time, mural art became an expression of subaltern ethnicities in America such as the Latin, the Hispanic or the Afro. It was considered as a folk expression to the point that gallerists used the term Urban Folk to name the first exhibitions of works made by people painting at the streets for a while in New

13.- IOSIFIDIS, K., 2009. *Mural Art: Large Scale Art from Walls Around the World from Graffiti to Trompe l'oeil*, vol 2. Mainaschaff: Publikart, p. 48

14.- SOMMER, R., 1975. *Street Art*. New York: Links

15.- IOSIFIDIS, K., 2009. *Mural Art: Large Scale Art from Walls Around the World from Graffiti to Trompe l'oeil*, vol 2. Mainaschaff: Publikart, pp 112-113

16.- COCKCROFT, E., WEBBER, J. and COCKCROFT, J., 1977. *Toward a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement*. New York: Dutton

17.- Ibie, 2014. Interview ARYZ X FINE RATS. *Street Art Barcelona* (retrieved online, <http://www.streetartbcn.com/interview-aryz-x-fine-rats/>, 12-10-2014)

18.- COCKCROFT, E., WEBBER, J. and COCKCROFT, J., 1977. 'Aesthetics'. *Toward a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement*. New York: Dutton, pp 238-369

19.- SIQUEIROS, D. A., 1973. *L'art et la révolution*. Paris: Editions Sociales p. 23-26; ; TIBOL, R., 1961. Siqueiros: introductor de realidades. México D.F.: UNAM, 1961, pp 53-58; VILLAJOS, S. G., in press. 'From Ruskin's Grotesque to Street Art. Art Nouveau Murals and longue durée' III Art Nouveau International Congress. Barcelona: Coup de Fouet

20.- WACKLAWECK, A., 2011. *Graffiti and Street Art*. London: Thames & Hudson

21.- GONZÁLEZ, A. M., 1982. 'Murals: Fine, Popular, or Folk Art?'. *Aztlan* 13, pp. 149-163

York in the 1970s instead than Street Art,²² before the latter became normalised.

By the 1970s, therefore, the practices of mural art were closely related to particular social communities, so they became the factual expression of their intangible cultural heritage. It was not until 2003 that UNESCO established the criteria to define the intangible cultural heritage as ‘a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development’ after the recommendations of 1989 and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, since it means ‘the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage’, which are ‘transmitted from generation to generation’ and ‘constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provide them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity’, being indispensable criteria their compatibility with ‘existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.’²³

Cultural intangible heritage is explored in this paper from the point of view of the processes of creation, (creative, social and historical) of the mural ‘No present nor future without memory’²⁴ (FIG 6) as a cultural project associated with a set of definite practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills. In order to do that a contextualising ecological approach is taken.²⁵ That connects global and local issues through a non driven interview with Veronica Werckmeister (VW) and a site-specific interpretation of public art in relation to the local memory of the historical facts of 3rd of March in the neighbourhood of Zaramaga by Lander García (LG), a member of the local community in charge of the association Martxoak Hiru - 3 de Marzo whose aim is to protect and to enhance this particular intangible cultural heritage from a human rights activist’s position.

22.- STAHL, J., 2008. *Street Art*. Bonn: Ullmann, p. 161

23.- UNESCO, 2003. Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Paris: UNESCO, p. 5 (retrieved online, https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/2003_Convention_Basic_Texts-2018_version-EN.pdf, 24-11-2018)

24.- WERCKMEISTER, 2013. ‘No Present nor Future without Memory’. La Ciudad Pintada Itinerario Muralístico (retrieved online, <http://www.muralismopublico.com/p/en/murals/vitoria-gasteiz/no-present-nor-future-without-memory.php>, 24-11-2017) ; ASOCIACIÓN DE VÍCTIMAS Y FAMILIARES DE VÍCTIMAS DEL 3 DE MARZO, 2014. ‘El mural de Zaramaga sobre el 3 de Marzo listo para ser inaugurado’. *Martxoak 3 de Marzo* (retrieved online, <http://www.martxoak3.org/el-mural-de-zaramaga-sobre-el-3-de-marzo-listo-para-ser-inaugurado/>; <https://www.gasteizhoy.com/mural-3-de-marzo-zaramaga-inauguracion/>, 24-11-2017)

25.- GIBSON, J.J., 1977. ‘The theory of affordances’. In: SHAW, R. and BRANSFORD, J., eds., *Perceiving, Acting and Knowing*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum



FIG 1. Veronica & Christina Werckmeister (dirs), 2007. The Thread of Time. Mural at Plaza de las Brullerías. Itinerario Muralístico Vitoria-Gasteiz. (source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/54/Vitoria - Plaza de las Burullerías %28%27Al hilo del tiempo%27%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/54/Vitoria_-_Plaza_de_las_Burullerías_%28%27Al_hilo_del_tiempo%27%29.jpg))

Santiago Villajos (SV)

For the last four years I've been developing an ethnography of Mural Art in Spain. I interviewed organizers of the Asalto Festival in Zaragoza, artists who took part in Quintanar, Salamanca, Madrid... I'm interested in contrasts between projects because it is a phenomenon that was happening at the same time but in different ways.

Veronica Werckmeister (VW)

It is evolutionary. I've just arrived from Catalonia and there I was with different people from the United States and Catalonia who organize this kind of festival oriented projects. They are realizing that the scene is changing a lot. It is not sustainable for the artists nor the communities.

SV: It all goes super fast. So then, first, could you please explain what is the Muralismo Público project, when does it start and how it develops?

VW: *The IMVG started in 2007. Well, actually in 2005. We did a little workshop because I come from making public community murals in the United States, so I was invited to lead a*

workshop here under similar conditions. We did an indoor collaborative mural project for a cultural association. The participants enjoyed the workshop very much but understood that the true realm of muralism is outdoors: public. The people who participated in the workshop themselves wanted to do something bigger and outdoors. It took two years. We organized the first one in 2007 with nothing, just with a little support, independently, without doing any big project. We asked permission from the neighbours of the flat's community where we wanted to paint the mural. We were lucky that it was a central facade placed in the heart of the Casco Viejo (old town), in a square that was quite degraded (FIG 1). My sister Christina and I directed the process for the participative mural with thirteen male and female volunteers. It was a success. People liked it a lot and from then on we could start to develop something larger and to communicate the concept, the foundations of the project, which are participation, collaboration and providing "non-artists" with tools in order to make public art. Everything started from there.

SV: And what was the response? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the participative methodology? Did you have some issues with the public in the city, censorship or something like that?

VW: *The formulation of the project is quite well based in the sense that we always believed the murals had to be participative from the beginning. They have to be collaborative and the design of the mural has to come from that process. That is to say, it is not an individual artist who designs his/her artwork and then carries it out with the people's support, but the people themselves who take part from the very conception of the idea. That means there is not a previous sketch or design that can be shown when asking for permission or funding. The owners of the facade, for example, are asked to give their permission for the mural without knowing what the mural will even be. That is the first difficulty in the sense that people have to be convinced to participate in something with an unknown result. When asking stakeholders, supporters and neighbours for something (funding, permissions, support, etc.), they inevitably reply with more questions: "What are you going to paint?" and we say "Ah. We don't know..." "Well, but, more or less...?", they ask. "We don't know because everything is about the process..." It was difficult at the beginning, but the people liked it once we had done several murals and we had considerably fewer problems in that sense, later on. There were some building where the owners association did not want the mural and so we never insist. A community must commit to the process unanimously. We also had some other problems with institutions. It depends on who was in charge at that moment. If they asked for a sketch, for instance, we could not provide one and said "If you want a commissioned mural then ask for it, but that is not this. This is not our mission".*

Another important factor is the artist that directs each project. Each project is led by an artist or team of artists that behave a little like a coach or a coordinator with artistic skills,

of course. We select artists based on their artistic abilities and their abilities to fulfil that role of coordinator and coach, even if they are not professional muralists, nor come from the Street Art world. These artists are, in a sense, required to submit to the collaborative process just as the non-artist participants do. Some artists need to be convinced to take part, because artists in general work alone, and it can be difficult to change your artistic practice form solitary to collaborative. Individually, we can start with an idea, express it and don't need to argue with anyone or stand up for it at that moment. But if you are subject to the collaborative process, then you have to yield and to discuss, etc. It's a completely different momentum.

In relation to the push back or obstacles... they were what one might imagine, right? That is, I mean that public art is hard to fit into projects of city branding. In over 10 years of projects, we only received a grant from the Culture Department for the first mural. Funding never came from Culture, it came from other departments, such as Economic Promotion, Communication, and Social Participation. Let say that we did not enter the usual paths of local culture, which is more dedicated to other matters such as exhibitions, promoting emerging art... in effect promoting more individual art, right?

SV: Thanks.

VW: *I'm not sure if I answered completely.*

SV: That's right, so you have had to face obstacles. You always stopped when you were asked for a sketch, so never reached the point to paint something that people rejected later, right? Not that...

VW: *No, let's see. When we start a project we provide some, let's say, guidelines from the organization to the artists, not only to the ones who direct but also to the volunteering artists, to the people and citizens who participate. We say that working in the public space is a big responsibility and also that public space belongs to everyone. Then, without the need of establishing any rules or anything, it is obvious that the murals are not controversial nor provocative at first glance, but of course, there are little critical details within each of them. However, I mean, the fundamental idea is that there are other interventions in the public space that can be more provocative, political, etc.. But that is not something we had wanted as an objective. The structure we set up provides the space for the creation of community murals, interventions combined with responsibility, so I believe we more or less have avoided controversial matters.*

It is true, of course, that we love it when the mural designs are affected by the moment in which they are painted, by the people who are participating in the workshops, as well as passersby when they are being painted. Almost all of the murals suffer or benefit from shifts in the sketch or the design after comments of the people who pass by, or because the

group decides at that moment “look, then... let’s include this, it is going to look...”, because we have had a contribution of an association or... Well, it is public art, which is almost like a performance and, since it is publicly made, it is transformed in that moment and that place That is good, yes.

SV: That is pretty interesting. Right, let’s go on... I wanted to ask if all the murals are in the Casco Viejo. I know the historical center of Vitoria is singular, it is important because it conserved, the whole medieval urban street outline.

VW: Yes, yes, yes.

SV: I do not know if all the murals are either in the centre or not, or just the majority. Could you please specify? Does the fact of intervening in a historical centre somehow condition the process? What are the particularities of working in a historical centre?

VW: *Right, there are 12 murals in the historical centre, in Vitoria’s Casco Viejo, and 4 murals, those made from 2013 to 2016, in this neighbourhood, Zaramaga. Intervening in the historical town conditions many aspects. Some people dislike it. I know there has been a trend within the sector of, don’t know how to name it, cultural heritage, architects... certain individuals who love, let’s say, to keep things as they are. But the matter of bringing colour to this part of the city is liked by most of the people because, in the end, we had not intervened upon any historic building in Vitoria’s Casco Viejo.*

To select the buildings we have a map. Each building has a degree of conservation assigned to it, and there are some we both cannot and do not want to paint. On the other hand, now, in the last fifteen years, Vitoria’s Casco Viejo has had an important structural, cultural and even social renovation. There were some facades, the first one we intervened, for example, that were in very bad condition. One of the objectives of the project is to structurally improve the facade, prepare it for painting and fix any superficial structural problems. A construction company is contracted to do this work to assure the quality.

We believe in public collaborative art. Art made by the people doesn’t need to be in a distant part of the city, on the outskirts. It should be given importance and occupy the same space as any other cultural intervention coming, so to speak, from above. Yes, this is culture from the bottom and we believe that needs to be valued, right? Not to push it aside. In this manner, placing the murals at the Casco Viejo, people who come to visit Vitoria to see the Cathedral, the historical heritage, etc. are surprised while walking by a mural that later they discover was made by the neighbours themselves. So I believe that confers a character and an individuality to Vitoria which is also important.

SV: Thank you. There is another matter that links a little with this... I planned to ask it later though... The issue of materials. Well, you said it more or less... How do you engage the issue of conservation? Was taken into account from the beginning and in the use of materials? If you have considered sustainability... how have you thought about sustainability in the sense

of processes and materials? What is your future outlook of sustainability for the mural project?

VW: *Right. As I said before, we paint the murals on a professionally prepared surface. That is, let's say, the most important part, where everything follows because if the wall starts falling, the mural painted on it falls down too. For the materials, we have used the highest quality acrylic paint since the beginning. We had support from the start. For the first mural, we had a very reduced budget and asked the Sam and Adele Golden Foundation of United States for paint donation. They supported the program by sending some of their leftover paint. We received a package of colours we had not chosen, but we used them anyway. We have used this type of paint since the beginning. It is actually not cheap, but it is the best. We never thought it fair to mobilize so many people, asking them to commit to participate in a mural of these characteristics and later ask them to use substandard material. Doing so might mean their work would vanish or peel away within a year. This wouldn't coalesce with our objectives because of the same argument I mentioned before on valuing a collaborative art practice as much as one by any well-known artists working in the public realm. Therefore, for the conservation of the murals themselves, we work with the highest quality materials and we also apply a layer of varnish in order to protect from UV degradation. Unfortunately, there is not an established programme for restoration and conservation of the murals.*

SV: Well, it has not reached the point of needing one.....

VW: *It was not reached yet, but it is getting to the point.*

SV: Right, it's been years. Now...

VW: *Yes, it's been eleven years since the first one. The colours and everything keep quite well, but it is true that there are parts on some of the murals that are painted to the ground. The ground can be the worst enemy. Humidity starts escalating, and this endangers the adherence of the paint to the facade, doesn't it? Of course, we do what we can. I voluntarily, go with a robe, the trolley, and a ladder and if there is some paint peeling or any other small thing, I do my best to fix it. We have had no problems of graffiti over the murals, that is something which is important to mention, isn't it? And then we have always said that the murals are a part of the city, the city itself owns them and will decide if it wants to conserve, to restore. In the end, it is painting. It will not last forever. They are not works on marble, but I believe there is an interest in keeping them, isn't there? Vitoria-Gasteiz is starting to be known for them. It is part of the identity of the city and, well, let us see how this matter evolves.*

SV: Still it is very interesting that you took this into account since the beginning. Anyway, this actually links with the next thing I am going to ask. This question was somewhere else,



but because we are here I would like to ask which way do you frame this project within the movement, the great global Street Art movement? Does it fit or not? and if... well, for now, I leave this question.

VW: *Well, this recent movement of Street Art has been actually striking to us in the sense that we came from a different trend when we started. That is, totally different. Because I am not a scholar on the topic, but I understand that there are different trends arising in Graffiti, in which the Graffiti artists have repositioned themselves to make these large murals. We come from a tradition in the United States which is part of collaborative art since the 1960s and 1970s. This tradition intersects with the Graffiti movement in the United States but actually has a more social aspect which is more inclusive and less aligned with the “art world”. We neither come from the world of art nor the world of Graffiti. We come from a trend which is almost artistic social work. But it is true that even though we do come from that trend, they overlap.*

They overlap and the quality... one of the main aims of the project I personally trust much is which neither the social nor the collaborative or participative aspects of a project nor working with people who are not artists must necessarily diminish the quality of the work, right? There is the idea that there is an either/or paradigm in art. Where there is participation or there is quality, but not both together. Moreover artistic quality is subjective, anyway. Therefore, one of our goals is to strive for these two things to co-exist in each project: participation and quality to attempt that those two things go hand in hand: participation and quality. It is not always achieved, but it is a goal.

And so, what happens? That nowadays there is a tremendous quality within Street Art. I wonder with people. I mean in painting. People used to say that painting was dead. When you went to museums in the past you almost could not see paintings in museums of Modern art. I think painting is coming back and the Street Art world will make a public showcase for many artists which, I think, is quite good. Also, Street Art has given a lot of life, culture, to many cities. [...]

Furthermore, I note a tendency in artists working individually in the public space, the responsibility they have towards the communities they work in, more than the idea of the parachute artist who arrives, paints wherever and whatever he/she wants and leaves. They are realizing that it doesn't feel right anymore, or they see that they can benefit from integrating their creative process within a community that might even contribute to their art. everything is happening too fast, but I think this matter is going to be evolving, since critiques are already being made to the big fast festival, to murals appearing everywhere like mushrooms. An artist doing practically the same mural in twenty cities of the World... I think things are changing.

SV: Yes, thank you. The other question... you slightly answered it. What about the relation, if there is any relation - I have read some and do not know to what extent, you surely know



more - between participative muralism and classic Graffiti which normally is... vandalistic, isn't it? Have you ever collaborated with graffiti practitioners here in Vitoria? Could you explain a little bit that, because I understand you have more [experience about] the school of Philadelphia and the matter of those kinds of typologies?

VW: *Well, I am not an expert in Graffiti.*

SV: I know, you are an expert in the processes. So, I do not know to what extent you have managed to find that dialogue along the way. You said that graffiti practitioners respect. They respect. That tells a lot, but...

VW: *I think that the aspect of Graffiti in Vitoria is very developed. It was already before we started painting murals. There are some good graffiti writers who work here. They do pretty cool stuff. Also in places like Bilbao and Donosti, there is an acceptance, even at a local level. There are not many fines and people appreciate them indeed. They are asked to paint, offered walls and so on. I do not know many details on this aspect, but many are relatively known. We worked with a female graffiti practitioner who directed one of the murals in tandem with a photographer and we worked with people who signed up in the workshops and normally paint graffiti. In Vitoria-Gasteiz, I think that people are very open to street painting. I don't know why. There are several reasons. If you have a walk around you can both see a collaborative mural on a dividing wall done by us and graffiti all around. In many styles: figurative, pieces, bubble letters... anything. That is, there is a little bit of everything. And well. It is what I said before. We overlap but we come from other... We have other aims. At the end of the day, Graffiti has other objectives and they are not in conflict with the things we do. Sometimes they overlap.*

SV: Yes, expression is always there, isn't it? The aim of expressing something.

VW: *Yes, right, Graffiti is, what I understand, almost a compulsion. It is a necessity and a willing too and, I don't know, an activity and a public expression. It is also a language, a visual language which not everyone understands, which is often internal to the world of Graffiti where the street is simply the scenario. I like it, generally, I like it. I like interventions in the street. I think it gives colour, individuality, especially this because otherwise all the cities end up being the same and that is not the best thing.*

SV: Ok. Now... there are two questions left. The impact in local communities, how it has been? Well, one question is the matter which is debated in many Street Art forums about gentrification in relation to Street Art interventions and happenings. Which way do you think the case of participative muralism which somehow integrates local communities may occur or not in relation to gentrification processes? And so, the impact in local communities, how it has been? Has there been gentrification, hasn't there been any? Which kind of...?



FIG 2. Michelle Angela Ortiz & Iván García Bartolomé (dirs), 2011. The Light of Hope. Mural at Calle Zapatería, 76. Itinerario Muralístico Vitoria-Gasteiz. (source: Antonio Ruiz https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/-7kO16Yq5D0s/UZKzOHYwxxI/AAAAAAAAAGPs/r7Qz-2cl7BY/s1200/itinerario_muralistico_vitoria_gasteiz_4.JPG)

VW: *Well, I'm not an expert on gentrification either, I cannot be about everything, but my instinct... I get worked up about it. How the artists are blamed for everything! For God's sake! That is, is this also our fault? Gentrification is the businesses who come! In my case it coincides that I lived in the United States in two cities, Oakland and Brooklyn, which the year I left became very hip places... No way I could afford going to those places now. And then you say... that's true, isn't it? Now they become so expensive and you see it on paper and say "It's obvious, the artists came and it soon became expensive!" But then you say "no". I don't know how to say it. The businesses. Capitalism follows the people to the places they go to expend money or whatever. The artists seek inexpensive places. They go to the peripheries and then everything else follows them. But, I don't know. It's not their fault. They go with good vibes.*

SV: *Sure, but those kinds of circumstances, in the case of participative muralism...*

VW: *Sure, no. I don't think so. That is, in the beginning, there was a certain part of the society of the Casco Viejo began that type of argumentation, I think, as a result of a lack of awareness: "Listen, now we are filling it all with murals, tourists will come and they will increase the rents... So what is the impact on the people living here?" And so. But, just because of it, the matter of involving the neighbors themselves and creating the content with them. I mean the content of the murals at the Casco Viejo talks about the neighbors*

living in the Casco Viejo. That is, when you do a visit to the murals in the Casco Viejo, if you are not from Vitoria, people will tell you anecdotes about the Casco Viejo, about the music that was there, the immigration that was there, the history that was there... anecdotes about the neighborhood indeed.

That is giving back. That is valuing the neighborhood itself and the people living in it. They are not things alien to the neighborhood. Now, this year we are running a project in the Casco Viejo and the mural will honor the social activism existing there. Then the murals tell the history of the place they are located. This is very important too. I think that's the point. You cannot take a mural as a painting in your home and move it from the corridor to the living room. The mural is there, so let it tell something from there, right? And the murals of Vitoria do. I think that people see themselves in the murals and appreciate them. They do not see them as an invasion or something alien. They see them as theirs. In fact, they describe them, they do walks for relatives who come to visit and explain them, because the people understand them.

SV: Genial. So this links with the last question: Which way have you integrated the processes of generating memory and identity within the project? Could you refer to any mural in particular or some murals in particular that more or less incorporated this? Though you just said all of them...

VW: *Yes, actually every mural talks about the place since the first one, that was in Plaza de las Brullerías and does it about a 13th-century fabric market (FIG 1). It is almost like a still life of drapery, but it also tells about the cultural diversity that existed there in the Middle Ages and the one nowadays. Therefore it refers to 20th and 21st-century migration, integration, and multiculturalism. And so, then, all the murals. From the one that was done about equality (FIG 2), that was about particular subjects on equality at the Basque Country: the matriarchy; the evolution, let's say it like that, of the fight for gender equality; in which every figure is a portrait of people from the neighbourhood; to the one that more clearly deals with historical memory: the first one we did in Zaramaga about the 3rd of March (FIG 6). That was an important milestone in the history of Vitoria. It was actually very important to create a mural showing and explaining objectively what occurred and claiming justice and memory for the victims just in front of the church where all those events happened. When we did that mural the people were constantly in tears... , anecdotes by passers-by, older people telling stories, etc. I think that is the objective, that is the objective a mural should have, isn't it? Provoking emotional reactions, memories, freezing time, telling a history of the people that can't be found in traditional history books, so it has to be told from the point of view of the people, of the common people.*

SV: Right. If you want to say anything else...

VW: *I don't know. You see I have many... blah, blah, blah [laughs]*

SV: Yes

VW: *Come on. I could say many more things! Is there something left?*

SV: No... I asked you about the future perspectives for the project in relation to the materials. But may you also consider the matter of memory to end up with something you can say how you see it has evolved and how do you think it will evolve?

VW: *In Vitoria in particular?*

SV: Yes, in the scene... It is actually a quite particular project for the case of the Spanish state...

VW: Yes

SV: ...in which normally, generally, it is more about what you said on taking a painting from the living room and setting it at the street.

VW: *Yes, yes. Now it's being done, as I told you before, in Catalonia. I have just been in Sant Feliu de Llobregat and they are working on it, but with a renown artist (Escif) who is going to work thanks to an artists residency.²⁶ Because that is the problem, it is not the fault of the artists. They give you a shitty budget, five days for painting something and you have no time to work social integration. That is, no way. In Vitoria-Gasteiz, we give the artists six weeks to work with the volunteers, with citizens and to do it under the right time and conditions, otherwise... It is true that here in Vitoria we are noting that there is more participation, not only for muralism but also in other areas: cultural, social and political too. Here it is more valued. I think that is important. Let's see. I wish it would not be participation only for its name: "Oh, yes, there is participation!" That is nothing, it is filling out a form and so on, but I think that [community participation] is more appreciated and, well, we are doing two murals now in 2018. The process we have established can be appreciated in other places. When they have chances and time to do it, they can do it, because I obviously understand it is a process requiring more...*

SV: You worked in Bilbao, don't you?

VW: *Yes, we worked in Bilbao in 2012. We made a very large mural under the Salve Bridge in front of the Guggenheim Museum and now we are making a really interesting mural in Barakaldo which is going to be at the town's centre and deals with historical memory from the Spanish Civil War to the Transition to democracy, so it is going to be... well, it is being. We are now meeting the participants and will paint it by spring. Obviously, this kind*

26.- I.F., 2018. ' Así luce el mural que reivindica la lucha vecinal de Sant Feliu de Llobregat'. El Periódico, 20-06-2018 (retrieved online, <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/sociedad/20180620/mural-la-salut-sant-feliu-llobregat-6895686>, 04-07-2018)

of intervention at the end will create... They are in the town's centre, probably not everyone will like them, but let them see themselves reflected, let them understand that there has been the attempt of a process for integrating the people. It is not that from one day to the next a sculpture appears and you do not know who has placed it there or for what reason. No, then... That's it... Anyway, it is a struggle.

SV: It is the process as you say, that you might be six weeks with the people...

VW: *Yes, exactly, exactly. As you mentioned, I think the project of Vitoria is quite different from others, but not because of the project of Vitoria itself, but because of the reality they see, isn't it? The results of faster projects, one festival and suddenly ten murals are painted, that perhaps slow down [the processes]... Probably fewer murals but more distended and more integrated processes have more value. I think so, because at the end of the day, what people and communities want is to be heard. That is, I mean they would like to be heard. If someone comes and doesn't listen and puts something, then they will say "that's great" if they like it. But, oh! Listening to a person, that is the best present you can give. And more to a community. I always say that a mural is like extending a caress to a community, because it is like you touch them, like you say: "I know you are here, I appreciate you, I want to know about you, tell me your story, etc." So then the projects have such an extra value, right?*

SV: How beautiful the thing you just said.

Lander García (LG):

I'm Lander from the association Martxoak Hiru, which means 3rd of March. We are a collective working in the name of historical memory, the struggle against omission and suppression of human rights violations in our historical memory, and denouncing those violations while demanding justice for the victims, specifically of the events that occurred here in Vitoria in 1976. It is a struggle around the violence and unpunished and unrecognized state terrorism in Euskal Herria, the Basque Country, and in other parts of Spain as well. Being able to tell these stories and socializing our work and our demands is already a conquest. We have many activities denouncing and recovering the memory of these events which take place in Enea Gunea (Memory Place) and the surrounding neighbourhood and city. We carry out different initiatives with varying formats, such as guided tours with schools, conferences, exhibitions, talks, etc. For this year which is ending, 2017, we have had 1.200 people who have done a guided tour through the Zaramaga neighborhood in order to get to know what happened here in 1976.. They are mostly from high schools. [The tour] consists of relating the events that occurred that the State wants to cover up. The events are described, not as isolated occurrences, but rather they responded to an oppressive strategy that existed at the end of Dictatorship and the beginning of the Constitutional Monarchy which the official narration calls "Transition" (1975-1978).

It is necessary to understand the context of 1976, barely one year after the death of Franco, in a moment when the political dispute revolved around the breaking off with the dictatorship and reforming it. In Gasteiz there was a revolutionary process that started in workplaces, in factories, with the labour movement. It ended up organizing the whole city into a movement that threatened the status quo. That process was drowned in blood with the result of five people murdered and hundreds of injured. The 3rd of March 1976 is a turning point within the whole process of reform and rupture that was happening not only in the Basque Country but in the whole country. It was like the elites were driving that change and marked with blood the limits that changes could reach. Then those events went into a phase of absolute impunity and official oblivion. That is why we have to reconstruct the history, the truth, to claim for justice from the bottom, from the popular movement, from societies. That is why we say memory is itself a revolutionary act in a State that arises likes that, from oblivion and impunity. [...] We are going to focus a little on what we think has been the conquest of public space and the socializing of our cause. We are going to take a walk through the neighbourhood in order to see and to know which things have been conquered in public space. Taking our complaints out to the streets is an important change, as they are the visits [to urban elements that haven't changed in the 41 years since the events] as well as sculptures and artistic interventions made specifically to provoke interest and understanding of our cause. [We will see] artistic interventions we have done in the neighborhood that help to socialize the cause and to conquer the public space speaking out for the struggle against impunity.

The association was created in 1999 specifically to work on issues around the anniversary of March, 3. It has different activities, cultural dynamics, legal ways to reopen the case, protests, memory claims. On March 3rd many activities are organized in order to claim the memory of the victims in Gasteiz, also in order to unite with current struggles because in the end this was a fight for the working class and for freedom, and still that is fully valid nowadays. Therefore, the spirit of 3rd of March keeps on characterizing itself year by year as having many roots in the democratic and horizontal approach on which that struggle developed, so it is a movement which kept itself alive from the roots of the one of 1976. That is why, let's say, workers assemblies, horizontal political movements, different experiences in free networks, congresses, community projects, gastetxes (youth associations) and so on have such strength in Vitoria-Gasteiz. They are somehow rooted in the spirit of 1976.

The church of St Francis of Assisi in Vitoria is known as the church of 3rd of March because it is the location where a striking workers assembly was taking place on March 3, 1976, as a result of the labour protests then going on in Vitoria-Gasteiz. There had already been several strikes. The 3rd of March was the third one. People gathered into churches. There were 4.000 people in this church, the police surrounded the temple, gassed it and used live





FIG 3 (left). “Justice” graffiti written with blood on the floor in front of St. Francis of Assisi Church, Vitoria-Gasteiz in March 3, 1976. Reproduced in a poster (Dep. Legal: B.20.948-1976). FIG 4 (right). Workmen from Forjas Alavesas, 1986. Memorial installation at the crime scene of March 3, 1976

ammunition on the people when they tried to escape the tear gas. It was a miracle that only five people died because there were more than a hundred wounded by gunfire. There could have been more... such a magnitude... thousands of people... a State crime, and, well, the result was five dead. Three of them died the first day. Many shots fell in a human corridor [when people run] outside [the church].

Then the graffiti “Justice” was written on the floor right over the crime scene with the blood of one of the first people murdered (FIG 3). That very symbolic place became a memorial space for the victims since the beginning. In 1986, a memorial sculpture was installed, it is still standing today (FIG 4). [It happened] in the 10th anniversary, because anything that was placed there before was quickly removed by the police. There were people arrested during the first years because they tried to place monoliths or to build something for the place. That is why we say the conquest of public space is very important, since the state that wants to forget and to cover what happened, thoroughly took charge that no one brought that to light because it may have broken the strategy, the portrait they wanted to establish. That is the reason this [the sculpture] was placed in the early morning with fast concrete in the

10th anniversary over the symbolic place where “Justicia” had been with the blood of Pedro Mari. It was built by his workmates in the very same factory in which he used to work, Forjas Alavesas (Alava Forges), one of the most important companies of the time. So the monolith became the place where every year the demonstrations commemorate the anniversary.

SV: Was it an independent impulse?

LG: *Of course, it was installed in a clandestine manner during the night and it could not be removed. It stayed stuck thanks to the fast concrete. That was the fight for memory at the street level. [By then] even the celebration was banned. It was a display of all the things that still remained from an unwanted past, therefore, to claim it or to remember it was itself a denouncement of the current system. That is the reason it was repressed.*

It is important to note the characteristics of this process in Vitoria-Gasteiz. In the 1950s Vitoria-Gasteiz had about 50.000 inhabitants. Then an industrializing process occurred in which many companies were built and the population tripled in just twenty years. It went from 50.000 inhabitants in the 1950s to 150.000- 160.000 in the 1970s. What did it mean? That a lot of people and families from other parts of the country, from the rural areas of Extremadura, Castille, Andalusia, had come to Vitoria-Gasteiz for work. That had a demographic impact on the city and new neighborhoods were built. Zaramaga was constructed in order to host all the people who came to work in the 1960-1970s. On the other hand, that interestingly started creating several conditions at the time of organizing and the labor struggle because suddenly a young working mass arrived to Vitoria. These were some of the conditions that explain why an assembly movement of thousands of workers emerged and threatened the status quo. They were thousands coming in suddenly from rural areas without experience in manufacturing, so the approach of the workers’ assemblies fit quite well with that kind of people.

The women were also involved because there were women who started working in factories. Obviously, under Franco’s regime, the role of women was limited to a housekeeper position, etc. But the process of industrialization itself resulted in women working for companies, so they also participated in the strikes. In fact, there were some factories in Vitoria-Gasteiz in which almost the whole staff were women. For instance, Areitio that was a zipper factory. So the women also organized themselves in assemblies with the aim to join the strike and then they started participating. It is very honourable to see the women in the protests, in the demonstrations and so on. That clashed with another very interesting reality which is the one of the wives of the strikers, that opened up a very interesting conflict.

Then assemblies began forming all around the city in order to support the strike: neighbours, women, students. As I more and more people were organized, some arrests started to happen and people started being fired from work as well. Therefore they [the strikers] started to devise very imaginative proposals. The empty shopping bags of women were one of the symbols of the mobilizations. Women went to the markets in order to bring the demands of



FIG 5. Irantzu Lekue, 2016. Emakumeen Indarra (The Voice of Women). Detail of sculpture

the strike to other platforms in a performative way, just as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina were doing around the same time. The empty bags meant that their families were in the struggle. They went around the squares with the empty bags, so that became one of the symbols of the implication of women in the strikes. It was also a reactivation of the feminist struggles in Vitoria-Gasteiz because they were completely unstructured since the Republican years of the 1930s. Then the assembly of women in Vitoria-Gasteiz began in 1976 too. The events of 1976 were a turning point in many fields. In the feminist movement too, because women got organized again and assumed a primary role in many moments.

The latest project to brings artistic interventions about the 3rd of March to the streets is "M3M, a project to mark the 40th anniversary (2016). Five women artists have developed five artistic interventions in the public space. One of them chose the topic of the empty bags and made a sculpture which is called Emakumeen Indarra (The Voice of Women, FIG 5).²⁷ It is the last sculpture placed in the neighbourhood. Also, we have started a process of rewriting the history of 3rd of March from the point of view of women through a campaign for collecting testimonies of women, of working women in the companies that participated in the strikes, of relatives of the injured, of the nurses who attended them... in order to reconstruct, to retell it from the point of view of women. There are lots of untold stories. [The testimonies] are not just meant to complete them, but also to reread the history in another way. The specific intervention about women was the first point we started within the feminist process in the society. This time it was an institutional sculpture. It was neither necessary to place it at night nor with fast concrete in the early morning, so that means that we created certain conditions in the city along the way from 1986, when it was necessary to use fast concrete, to 2016, when the city council ended up supporting it thanks to the work of a lot of people. There is a social recognition in which the majority of people respect that the memory of the 3rd of March has to be in the street. That is a conquest. Sometimes we cannot

27.- Lekue, I., 2016. 'Memorial 3 de marzo Emakumeen Indarra'. Irantzu Lekue (retrieved online, <http://iralekue.com/portfolio-item/emakumeen-indarra/>. 24-11-2018)



FIG 6. Veronica & Christina Werckmeister (dirs), 2013. No Future nor Past Without Memory. Mural at Zaramaga quarter. Itinerario Muralístico Vitoria-Gasteiz.

value the small victories, but going from placing a sculpture secretly at night to [making it with] the recognition of the Council means that something has been achieved, isn't it?

The mural of IMVG is another great conquest (FIG 6). In 2011 the association considered the situation had reached a point in which the victims should be honoured beyond the 1986 monolith in order to tell what happened, so some panels were placed on billboards by the church of St Francis.²⁸ The panels had portraits of the victims on them. It included not only the ones of Vitoria-Gasteiz, but also two people who were murdered in Tarragona and Basauri in later demonstrations denouncing the massacre of Vitoria-Gasteiz. That is, finally we create a direct link between the repression of Vitoria- Gasteiz with that which took place in other cities: Tarragona and Basauri. In Basauri [the murder] happened at the general strike that was called in Euskal Herria on March 8, 1976 in response to the events of Vitoria-Gasteiz. Even in Rome a person was killed, Mario Marotta, in a demonstration that was organized by some Italian revolutionary leftists in order to denounce the events of Vitoria-Gasteiz at the Spanish embassy. There was a series of incidents, a shooting followed and he died in the surroundings. So, in those highly conflictive years, the repression in Vitoria-Gasteiz had responses that ended with a death in Rome. Now the church is closed to worship, but not in 2011, when the panels were removed and thrown away. We recovered them and put them back on a day that coincided with the fest of the neighbourhood as a non clandestine public event, but rather, a community activity. However, they took the panels off again. Installing the panels over and over again each time they were remove seemed silly, but then, between 2011 and 2012, we decided that was the moment for the Council to get involved in the installation of some protected physical elements because it was not a good idea to let the things go that way. The idea of making a mural came out of that context.

When we decided to make the mural, there existed a tradition of public mural art in the Casco Viejo of Gasteiz thanks to the IMVG that has some special characteristics. People sign up to take part in the projects as volunteers. There is obviously an artistic direction, otherwise, you could not get results like that, right? Then the neighbours of the building are asked. They all have to agree on the fact that a mural is going to be done with a participative process in which decisions come out about what is going to be painted, how and so on. All the previous murals were done in the Casco Viejo in buildings with a few neighbours. Therefore, this was the first tower block in which many neighbours had to agree on the mural. The first answer when you ask someone "Listen, I am going to paint a mural in your house..." is "What are you going to paint". And we do not know, because it will be a result of the participative process, so the answer is "We don't know what we are going to paint". Anyway, all the neighbours agreed because it was supported by us, the 3rd of March association, and the subject matter

28.- ASOCIACIÓN DE VÍCTIMAS Y FAMILIARES DE VÍCTIMAS DEL 3 DE MARZO, 2014. 'Memoria viva en Zaramaga - Martxoak 3 inaugura un mural en recuerdo a las víctimas del terrorismo de Estado'. Martxoak 3 de Marzo (retrieved online, <http://www.martxoak3.org/memoria-en-zaramaga/>, 24-11-2017)



was a memorial for the 3rd of March. Then a process started with the people who signed up for the workshop with the artistic direction of Christina and Veronica Werckmeister, the ones who directed the previous murals of IMVG, and another artist from Vitoria-Gasteiz [Javier Hernández Landazabal]. They directed the team of volunteers. There were two weeks of talks and debates between the people who signed up so they could agree on the design. It was not only about remembering, but also a reflection on the future about what those events in the past mean for the future.

The mural looks like a cork billboard on which someone pinned photos and newspaper clippings. compositionally it reads from top to bottom and has a chromatic shift going from black and white to colour. Also, it is primarily chronological because the upper part recreates or evokes the first moments of the striking process, the central part is the massacre, the great demonstrations, and the funerals. We have also the police recordings of that day somewhere else. That part of the mural shows a group of women carrying the coffin. One of them brings an empty bag, the icon we mentioned before. Then the narration goes on towards the transmission of memory from older generations to younger ones. There is the word Justice written with blood on the floor which is the most iconic image of 3rd of March, but there is also a red thread with a pencil on a white page, that is the white page we have to write on red: the transmission. Moreover, the mural goes from Spanish to Basque too, which is another of the traits of the city because Vitoria-Gasteiz is related to the recovery of the Basque language. The final part is a newspaper clipping about the process open in Argentina against Franco's regime because obviously Spanish justice does not judge itself and there are no ways to open a judicial path to judge the crimes of Francoism as it has been done in other places of South America, e.g. Then, a process was opened in Argentina on the basis of universal jurisdiction by which the criminals responsible of the Vitoria-Gasteiz killings and many other ones are being investigated. There are even detention orders against them. However, that has no judicial path because the Spanish state does not allow his/her ministers to be judged, but there is the symbolic value of breaking with the narration of impunity that exists in the Spanish state: the victims of Francoism traveled to Argentina, and sat in front of a judge and were finally heard.

The mural is full of symbolism and little details. I insist on how the things changed in barely 15 or 20 years, from placing [a memorial] in a clandestine way at night to get some scaffoldings and stay painting a mural for two months. It was inaugurated at the end of October 2013. It was started in September after the processes of participation had taken place. The photo with the elder explaining to a young person is like a paradigm of transmission. It also symbolizes participation itself. I do not know how many people participated in painting the mural, but there were neighbours from the building itself. It was quite an event for the neighborhood, very participative. So that fit quite well with the spirit of 1976, the assembly



FIG 7. Martzoak Hiru - 3 of March Society. The Funerals of March 3, 1976 at the New Cathedral in Vitoria-Gasteiz. Mural on canvas placed at the facade of St Francis of Assisi Church.

process, participation: "What do we do? How do we do it?" There were about thirty people painting, so-known as the Brigada de la brocha (paintbrush squad). There was an agreement with the Council for promoting social insertion by which they employed young people with a minor contract for their first job, likewise, there was the group of volunteers and the artistic direction.

We finish this visit at St Francis, the church where the massacre took place. But there is another quite larger route people can take with an audio-guide. On a wall of the church, there is another artistic intervention recalling the funeral that took place three days after the killings at the New Cathedral. It is a mural painted on a large canvas which is deteriorating relatively fast due to the weather (FIG 7). It recreates an emblematic photo of the funerals. In front of the church there is a metal post with the portraits of the victims and an explanatory text written by the association itself that was placed by the Council (FIG 8). The families of the seven murdered workers, also including the ones from Basauri and Tarragona, were reunited for the first time when that was inaugurated in November 2013. It was a very important moment, since Vitoria-Gasteiz always has had a considerable consciousness about the massacre because of the dimensions of the crime. Obviously, 5 murdered, 100 injured and 5.000 witnesses lead to a movement around it. But there were also many isolated cases during those years. It is not the same if your brother has been killed in a demonstration in Tarragona and you are alone. So we took the responsibility to raise awareness about other cases from the strength of our association because the massacre has a larger dimension than a single family or an isolated case. That is why we incorporated the memory of Juan Gabriel and Vicente Aitor to our demands.



FIG 8. Martzoak Hiru - 3 of March Society, 2016. Memorial metal post with portraits of Pedro M^a Mtz. Ocio, Francisco Aznar Clemente, Romualdo Barroso Chaparro, José Castillo García, Bienvenido Pereda Moral, Juan Gabriel Rodrigo Knafo, Vicente Antón Ferrero.

By that time, Spain had signed a concordat with the Vatican by which the police could not enter the churches. Moreover, there were working class priests who were implicated with the people. That had always existed. There was a rivalry between the Catholic hierarchy and priests such as the liberation theology ones, priests allied with the working class and so on. So these priests allowed the assemblies to take place, not only in St. Francis but in many other churches of the city. There was a network of assemblies that allowed to organize the isolated ones into a larger assembly of assemblies. And priests were of course involved, some of them were even victims of reprisal because they took part in the process. The hierarchy was another matter, it was one of the pillars of the dictatorship, but of course, there were priests who got involved and that was one of the reasons the assemblies were so participative.

St Francis Church has very interesting architectural features. It belongs to Neo-Modernism, an artistic movement that took place in the 1960s when Aranzazu was built. Its designer was Peña Ganchequi, from the school of Chillida. He also designed the Plaza de los Fueros in Vitoria-Gasteiz. The building resembles Noah's ark. It was planned with a pit full of water around. Remnants of gunshots can still be seen outside on the facade. There is a permanent exhibition of nativity scenes inside which is the argument of the Church by which the association cannot get the whole space for its memorial activity. People want to see nativity scenes in August, right? That's logical. It is the argument they hold in order to not start a

negotiation. We have a little space in the building with a few artistic interventions. There is an old football table in there that represents a football match that took place between women workers as one team and worker's wives on the other. The match was a way to raise money for the resistance fund for the striking workers. Most of the artworks in that space were done for the 40 anniversaries in 2016. There is a small space in which it is possible to watch the projection of an audio-visual piece, right in the same place where people would have been sitting a few hours after the massacre. It includes real recordings of the police that were captured from their modulated frequency signal at a radio station. There are also recordings of Manuel Fraga, the founder of current Spanish People's Party, who died in 2005. He was the minister of Interior during the years of the Transition and was the one who ordered the police to shoot the workers gathered in St Francis. It only can be seen here".

Conclusion

This ethnographic work provides a case study which demonstrates how Street Art may fit the UNESCO guidelines on intangible cultural heritage. In order to do so, the focus on processes is crucial. The key elements in this particular case study are many. The most evident is probably the survival of a community and participative tradition in Vitoria-Gasteiz based on dialogue and collective decision-making that adapted to changes along time. Moreover, Vitoria reveals a persistence in the use of Street Art practices such as graffiti, installations and mural art in public spaces as an expression of the interpretation of historical events by local peoples. The contextualizing approach followed up in this work in order to connect global and local issues shows some benefits in the methods of community mural art for the processes of enhancing and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage as well as producing social integration and human development. These intangible aspects are likewise related to the matter of sustainability since community concern necessarily has a positive effect in caring for the murals. The informants of Vitoria-Gasteiz showed how these artworks are not understood as a final product. But, more than objects, the murals themselves are perceived as processes embedded into a wider social dynamic in which aesthetic value comes out of social engagement to a larger extent than social acceptance, which is somehow subordinated to the former. Consequently, the IMVG sacrificed quantity production in order to enhance quality, both from material and intangible points of view and so aimed to emphasize sustainability. Finally, the subject matters of the IMVG murals in general and particularly the case of No present nor future without memory and the whole local knowledge related to the 3rd of March reveal themselves as idoneous to fit the criteria agreed internationally on intangible cultural heritage by which the promotion of human rights and mutual respect between communities are key factors of sustainability. murals are like a caress to a community.

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