Clean Wall, Voiceless People: Exploring
Socio-Identitarian Processes through Street-Urban Art as Literature.

A Dissertation Project submitted to the

Faculty of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts,

University of California, Merced

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in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements

for the Doctor of Philosophy in

World Culture

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2014

Dedication

…Que nuestro viaje sea largo…

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

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Abstract of the Dissertation

My dissertation underlines the fundamental link between culture, societies, and urban environments, with a deep exploration of new approaches to cultural policy, such as cultural planning. Mapping and planning new aesthetic scenarios, I defend street-urban expressions as forms of social re-action, against a regime of power that controls and determines human behaviors and impoverishes culturally and economically cities.

Reflecting on interdisciplinary processes -the collection, cataloging, and sorting of pictures, travel, writings, photographs, knowledge and experiences- of exploration into the relation between space, place and self, I promote the construction of new personal identities. I also analyze how the experiences and memories of citizenships, neighborhoods, and even streets and walls, begin to define a shared identity with regard to place through a reflexive social-collective process.

My dissertation attempts to turn upside down the connection between art and society, by providing a change of perspective that allows us to see our urban environments in different ways, re-contextualizing urban public art within a larger cultural studies framework, and underscoring the complex web of social processes that brings together *artivists*,[1] social thinkers, researchers, and *glocal* residents.[2]

Fig. 1   **Escif-**"On-Off"

1. Introduction

"And the sign flashed out its warning

In the words that it was forming

And the sign said, "The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls

And tenement halls""

Simon and Garfunkel

Fig. 2   **Clet Abraham-**"Street Signs"

What is a symbol? What is a complex society? The theoretical framework for my approach is informed by the assumptions that a symbol is a complex structure and that a complex society is a human structure characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals that share a distinctive culture or tradition created by cultural transmission. It will also allow me to take up the idea that symbols embedded within street-urban artworks are representations of complex cultural ideals that, in many cases, can be correctly considered as mutant archetypes

(**fig.2**) and, therefore, give ground to my thesis. In society, the rituals of communication exist in many different forms. Communication may occur through the spoken word, patterns of verbal expressions, visual stimuli, lives, memories or extra sensory perception. Through a mapped analysis of these forms of communication, I will explore how a public space can be interpreted and understood, especially through urban art, as a constructor of conceptual, resistant social frameworks**.** Images and figures expressed in social interchanges provide a means for communication. In public network systems, individuals as members of social groups recognize and produce symbols as part of normal *discourse*, as expressed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in *L'archéologie du savoir* (*The Archeology of Knowledge* 1969). As pointed out, symbols are important instruments for complex social processes that are interpreted by human awareness. Every artistic endeavor contains numerous denotations expressed at many different levels. Some of these are imbedded into art with a deliberate and conscious intent, while others are the result of subconscious communication. The unintended symbolic meanings are the work of the artist's subconscious mind. Recognition of the roots of meanings inherent in artistic endeavors can lead an individual to a source of great understanding and power, thus helping to build a social (r)evolution.

My dissertation analyzes, from a sociological and communicative way, some of the most important contemporary street-urban art productions. It has to be clear from the beginning that, because it is logic and dynamism, this form of expression cannot be closed into a rigid definition. Starting from now, and just to be more clear, I will refer to street-urban art by considering it as an amorphous beast encompassing art which is found in or inspired by the urban environment. With anti-capitalist and rebellious undertones, it is a democratic form of popular public art

probably best understood by seeing it in situ. Street-urban art is a tool for communicating views of dissent, asking difficult questions and expressing political concerns. Its definition and uses are changing: originally a tool to mark territorial boundaries of urban youth today it is even seen in some cases as a means of urban beautification and regeneration. Throughout my study, I will try to answer the following questions: how may street-urban art, interpreted as socio-cultural elements, help unveil and integrate symbolic realities in order to facilitate shared meanings and understandings between peoples? And thus, how might street-urban art generate the conditions for participatory, creative cultural diversity and thus contribute to the construction of a social (r)-evolution? Furthermore, through a cultural approach, my study aims to investigate the ways in which the transmission of symbols in street-urban art can create a networked public cultural sphere that constitutes a society's drive towards an active, critical, and public participation.

My thesis is an attempt to create new perspectives by offering different examples that integrate the central ideas of cultural productions, transmissions and evolution into a post-colonial symbolic frame: the trans-modern, hybrid society. Using this paradigm, my research develops a new perspective on the relationship between culture and social identities, underlining the links among elements of identity formation and how all this is related to social-cultural creation and evolution. I will present street-urban cultural production as a form of institutional critique and will defend urban expressions as forms of social reaction against a regime of power- or discourse- that controls and describes human behavior in terms of norms and deviance. In my opinion, street-urban art critiques the construct and mentality of the modern city by encouraging the public to subvert the hierarchies and power structures that create society's norms. This cultural production represents a reaction against hegemony that attempts to interact with the

viewer on a more intimate level than what is legally sanctioned. Following this methodology, I will claim that both legal and illegal street‑urban art expressions represent artistic reactions against the dominant cultural presences of marketing, advertising and the institutions of the art world, often represented by self-referential museums and money-oriented art merchants who enable artistic phenomena, but are completely distant from socio-cultural dynamic processes.

Additionally, I will show how the modern city, all over the world, aims to eradicate aggressively former public spaces, and how such policies are instigated and institutionalized by hegemonic groups' aesthetics of authority. By the same token, to explore street‑urban identities and artistic constructions, I have developed an interest in a series of inverse and binary relationships: periphery and center, global and local, popular and elitist culture, individual and collective. I have mediated these relationships to negotiate the space of liminality[4] inherent in their constructions. It is this in‑between state that acts as the medium through which I view and understand social actions and reactions. I will explore street‑urban art as a dialogue and an interaction with society. Society is in a monologue with itself, not allowing in outside voices or new thoughts. Street‑urban cultural production as a form of expression, narration, and communication could startle readers out of their routine and potentially help them start to evaluate society critically. Street-urban art is a unique form of subjugated narrative that attempts to have a different social dialogue offering a new voice into the vertical monologue of our present society.

My work, to summarize, has become a true reflection of an interdisciplinary process ‑the collection, cataloging, and sorting of pictures, travel, writings, photographs, knowledge and

experiences‐ of exploration into the relation between space, place and self. It will try to promote the construction of new personal identities and, most importantly, it will analyze how the experiences and memories of an active citizenship begin to define a shared identity with regard to place through a reflexive social-collective process. The construction of identity through our memories of place(s) is a process whereby the recollections and images of our lived experiences continuously shift, slide, and convene, providing the framework for our evolving identities. Our attachments to place can be explained through a progression by which place becomes our experience within it. It is translated into emotion, preserved as memory, imagined as a series or collection of images and used to reveal our perceptions in the creation of place for others. For this reason, I consider it my social obligation to explore the political (in the Greek meaning of the word, i.e., from Greek *politikos*, meaning "of, for, or relating to citizens") importance of public street-urban art, thereby stopping the master narrative of a white patriarchal society in our approach to creating new fruitful socio-urban environments.

1.1 Delimiting the field of enquiry and focusing the research

"Art is not to be taught in Academies.
It is what one looks at, not what one listens to, that makes the artist.
The real schools should be the streets"
Oscar Wilde

This research is situated at the junction of critical, socio-cultural and educational theories. It uses an interdisciplinary methodology comprising complementary empirical and theoretical approaches to investigate street-urban arts as trans-cultural formative experiences. The holistic approach contextualizes social actors' assertions in order to identify commonalities that may improve traditional socio-cultural figures and support the creation of new social identities. The thesis focuses on the question of how symbols construct, mediate and sustain meanings, social learning processes, exchange and integration in society, giving valuable insights into subjective as well as collective processes of identity re-construction.

This thesis focuses on the exploration of the socio-cultural application of street-urban art as a case study in order to support the idea that the same street-urban art serves as a vehicle for the passage from a socio-urban landscape to a socio-urban mindscape. Through this passage, one will have to consider the culture of any particular time and place as a changing physical and social environment where spectatorship, performance practices and representational contents adapt over time. Applying interdisciplinary approaches to my research, I can consider the possibility that cultural traits, such as performance traditions and genres, influence our daily life. To study how significations are produced and communicated through street-urban art, in and by the city, I will use a blend of a flaneuristic,[5] and a socio-psychogeographical approach,[6] as expressed by Guy-Ernest Debord in his essay "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography".

In this way, I conceive urban spaces as a result of complex semiotic process involving different sign systems, including the built environment, the patterns of social interaction, and the means of artistic communication. These interacting patterns change throughout history and from culture to culture. Entering an urban semiotic area, the goal of this thesis is to investigate the cultural artistic signs produced in the city, as well as specific processes through which the interaction between city, art and citizens act or re-act, creating a new specific cultural profile. Therefore, I will consider, among other topics, urban semiotics, including the study of self-referential urban sign systems (art, videos, advertisements, maps, urban planning, virtual scenarios, architectural imitation, and other sign systems representing the city) insofar as they contribute to the processes of producing urban spaces, new social orders, and symbolic identities.

Though this research, we will be located, into a post-trans-modern metropolis where we will be part of an ongoing transformation, mixing together internal and external structures and their interrelationships. The city, as a dynamic signifying process, constantly defines and redefines the borderline between the urban and the non-urban, between local and global, hegemonic and subaltern, and so on. Cities are hybrid microcosms of interweaved and fragmented (humans, land and culture) realities that offer a paradigm for culture and power, creating many opposing thoughts of humankind. My dissertation attempts to contextualize street-urban public art within a larger cultural studies framework, underscoring the complex web of social processes that bring together artists, social thinkers, researchers, and glocal residents, in the planning of new identitarian citizenships. How do we, as citizens, insert ourselves into this cycle of hegemonic place-making in order to break it? How does one re-claim or re-draw her/his personal and collective heritage within the existing landscape of our built environment? I will try

to elucidate the constant hybrid negotiation that takes place at the point where the margin meets the center. Incidentally, the location of their meeting point is not necessarily a clear and definitive line struck between two worlds or a political boundary of sorts without easily identifiable sides. Even though I am not a street-urban artist, I have always admired it, often trying to decipher messages, motives, and meanings. I have always considered street-urban art expressions as cultural catalyzers that create collective curiosity, deserving deeper investigations, and meriting better socio-political understanding.[7] Considering street-urban art as a form of narrative, in this thesis project, I analyze street-urban artists as part of a large body of people who actively attempt to revolutionize the ways of contemporary thought about societal values. Their narratives, I believe, tell stories that run counter to modern ideological narratives. Street-urban artists deal with the hegemonic culture by interacting with the public spaces where they write their narratives. I locate my investigation at the intersection of two main fields of inquiry: public space and the ideological impact of aesthetics. I will not present an exploration of street-urban art per se. Instead, I will focus on its aesthetic public dimension and social repercussions. I will bridge these domains, aesthetic and public, to account for the impact that aesthetics, street-urban art in particular, may exert on the agentic reclamation of places. Recognizing the extensive variety of street-urban art expressions, I developed my project using two criteria: first, the street-urban art I include in my analysis represents only "durable" forms of aesthetic transformation of public settings (walls, floors, urban design, metro stations, traffic lights, signposts); second, I concentrate solely on those street marking practices linked, in my view, with multiple ideologies of reclamation of public place. This way, street-urban art becomes, for me, an instrument that interlaces "trans-actions" between people, issues, and places. Thus, this participation draws spectators in as participants and brings about discourse. The action component is devoted to

achieving some social result. My study, for the nature of the art form on which I am focusing, is a multi-sited, multinational investigation of public place. I carried out a long ethnographic fieldwork in various countries, including the United States (New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco), Italy (Milan, Rome, Florence, Grottaglie), Mexico (Mexico City, Oaxaca, Tijuana), Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo), the United Kingdom (London, Bristol), and France (Paris, Marseille). Netnographic[8] exploration further increased the number of cities sampled throughout the world. The global Internet presence of street artists allows me to use a trans-local methodology that is central to analyze street‑urban art as cultural production based on collective terms of aesthetic codes and languages, ideologies, target audiences, history, and marking practices. Data collection ranged from observant participation (following street-urban art creations, and events; tracking of press reviews) to participant observation, such as videotaping street‑urban art interventions, interviewing, and collecting field notes. Data gathering was enhanced by a large-scale collection of artifacts, including street-urban art publications, press articles, television programs, flyers, street‑urban art guerrilla kits, and commercials deploying street‑urban art codes. A rich data corpus of field notes, interview transcripts, Internet downloads, photo and video documentation, and archival sources has resulted from the study: the comprehensive data set integrates 720 pages of transcriptions, 178 blog comments, 2450 photos, and fifteen hours of videos. Finally, fusing together different interdisciplinary approaches, I attempted to make a multivalent contribution of street‑urban art practices and the related ideologies of consumption of public place, giving analytical substance to what Michael Hardt and Toni Negri have recently called "a new place in the non-place society" (6) which would be the site of ontologically new socio-artistic determinations of the human and the base of alternative glocal cultural productions.

1.2. Specific Objective: a Socio-Artistic Construction of aCulture

"A wall throws down a challenge.
Protecting property,
defending order,
it is a target for protest,
insult,
demands
and for every political,
sexual,
or social passion"

Gilberte Brassaï

For centuries, humans have adorned walls with symbolic representations as a means of artistic expression. Starting with pre-historical cave paintings, "on the cavern walls of the recently discovered Chauvet caves in France, murals have been dated at approximately 32,000 years old," (Spiegelman 3) we can realize the importance of art in communicating with others for a religious or ceremonial purpose or just with the intention of sharing symbols. Likewise, the symbolic meanings of modern and post-modern urban walls (**fig.3**), following this historical *excursus*[9] provide communities with social norms, behaviors and cultural expectations through the artistic embodiment of the collective consciousness. Whether the intended original message of the pre-historical artist was to be conveyed to one person or to a larger societal collective is debatable, but its placement in a locality that was observable by others arguably supports the idea that its intended use was as a collective communicative tool. When considered as a tool for communication, the materialistic qualities of the paintings extend beyond the aesthetic qualities it retains. For the last century, murals have been used as a cultural unifier.

Fig. 3   **Bansky-**"Cave Painting Graffiti removal"

Muralists have established a conscious use of an art form to reach the masses without the support and/or restriction of upper-class bureaucratic entities that place controls and constraints on the dissemination of mass communication. Mural artists use their images to communicate a representative model to which all other members within the newly found culture should adhere. A mural is much more than just paint conformed to an aesthetically pleasing image. Rather, it has the potential to be a symbolic representation of the cultural imperatives that it embodies. The mural's ability to instill pride and to communicate hopes, fears, dreams and expectations (**fig.4**) extends the mural's purpose, as well as the purpose of the community that embraces it, while validating their simultaneous existence. As expressed by the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program's Executive Director Jane Golden, herself an artist, murals are a uniquely democratic, accessible,

and participatory art form that encourages to help beautify their neighborhoods and experience art in their everyday lives. Rather than existing in isolation from their surroundings, the murals function as a living component of our civic landscape and a testament to the strengths, dreams, and challenges facing the communities that contribute to their creation. Collectively, the murals form an outdoor gallery that represents the artistic autobiography of our city.

Fig. 4   **Ernel Martínez-**"Malcom X"

Murals are important in that they bring art into the public sphere. Murals normally exist where people live and work. A city, therefore, benefits from the beauty of a work of art that can add meaning to its denizens' daily lives. Murals can be a relatively effective tool for social

emancipation or for achieving a political goal. For this reason, visual effects are often an enticement to attract public attention to social issues. State-sponsored public art expressions, particularly murals, have been and are still often used by totalitarian regimes as a tool of mass control and propaganda. They also function as an important means of communication for members of socially, ethnically, and racially divided communities in times of conflict. Providing an effective tool to establish a dialogue, muralists have established a conscious or unconscious catalyzer that collects energies into the creation of a unified culture. Through mural placement, a certain group or community claims a space or area, an issue that has become important, particularly in gentrified areas. This form or art can often be an effective mode of communication because it draws on a community's collective memory, triggering associations and reactions to past and present events, while simultaneously looking towards and dealing with the future. Murals provide a forum where new value systems and new models of identification within a redefined society are publicly portrayed, thereby reinforcing the changes taking place.

Another historical form of mural and socio-cultural expression is represented by graffiti. The word "graffiti" derives from the Latin root of the word "graffiari", which means to scratch or scrawl. The negative connotations at the root of this word dates back to an opponent of Roman Emperor Julius Caesar, who expressed his aversion to his dictatorship on the walls of the Roman Forum. According to Nicholas Ganz and Tristan Manco: "Graffiti has been found on carved rocks in the ancient Egyptian town of Abu Simbel, and has also been discovered in the Italian city of Pompeii. Ancient graffiti messages addressed topics from the pleasures of food to advice on love and friendship" (8).

Fig. 5   **Joseph Kyselak-**"Name tag"

During the Middle Ages, graffiti becomes visible again and is found primarily on the exterior of churches. Shakespeare's time also provides evidence that graffiti writing was prevalent. "The very first documented individual who used the cities as canvases for their art is Take Joseph Kyselak (**fig.5**)(Vienna, 1799-1831): he wrote his name throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the early 19th century" (Martin). But it was not until the late nineteenth century that "public opinion turned against graffiti due to the relationship between the working

classes, who are imagined to be the authors of the graffiti, and the elite, who dominated cultural production" (Ganz and Tristan 27). It was during this time that people of higher status became less sympathetic to those of lesser rank, and "after the Romantic interest in graffiti as *pure creative act*, the Victorians returned to *real art*, losing interest in art that was being produced in the streets" (Lewisohn 27). Other precedents are represented by the hobos' monikers drawn in England and the United States. Their visual representations, also known as boxcar, were created with oil bars, mark alls, or wax pencils, and usually consisted of single color drawings, names and poetry. Writing on walls appeared also during the Second World War as a tool used by the Nazis to spread their propaganda. Graffiti was even more important for resistance movements as a way of publicizing their protests to the general public. Street-urban art has been influenced by some unexpected things, but its rebellious character seems partly derived from European revolutionary politics, which often used stencils to communicate propaganda. An example of this is "The White Rose," a German group of nonconformists who, until their capture in 1943, "spoke out against Hitler and his regime in 1942 through leaflets and painted slogans" (qtd.in Gleaton 8).

At the same time, but radically changing the perspective, the king of the stencil in Italy was the dictator Benito Mussolini, who used it to spread his fascist propaganda across Italy. In fact, the French street artist Blek LeRat, one of the pioneers in street-urban art, has even cited his memories of fascist stencils as a major influence on his work. The function of these stencils was to speak directly to the masses in the streets. These messages were normally coded by simple symbols that helped make them more accessible and more effective. During the period, Mussolini's face popped up on every corner of cities like Rome, Florence or Milan, three

important bastions for Italian fascism. This sense of the image as an icon (**fig.6**) that gets repeated over and over is one of the basic characteristics of street art since its origin.

Fig. 6   **Anonymous Artist**-"MussolinThaOriginalCHE"

Posters and painted words also helped protesters present their views in the public eye during student revolts spanning the 1960s and 1970s, and French students even utilized the pochior (the French word for stencil graffiti) technique. Following this quick *excursus* of the r-evolutionary graffiti art, we arrived in the early 1970s, when an aesthetic and or stylistic evolution took place throughout the world (**fig.7**): graffiti scribes began to place their personal definitions on the elements that simultaneously emerged during the growth of the culture. We cannot forget that street-urban art has soaked up a lot of the rebellious stance of skate and punk culture too.

Fig. 7   **AA.VV.**-"New York Graffiti"

The fundamental basis behind all these designs indicates the social perceptions, norms, and expectations found within the community itself, coming from a wall used as a mass medium to infer a message to, or from, a community. Murals, graffiti, and stencils hold a particularly strong significance in a culture that is personified by a common heritage. The roots of graffiti, as well as the multi-cultural ties that have been objectified by those who have placed their subjective marks on previously established structures, can be traced back to a time that precedes our current understanding of the establishment of artistic construction.

As each generation passes, street-urban art all over the world's walls adorns cities and social locations as a reminder of the well-known adage that history repeats itself. Street-urban art, as a mass medium, provides communities with an artistically expressed embodiment of the

collective conscious that exists within the community-at-large, thus reflecting the social norms, mores, and cultural expectations of the members within that community. Even as the art form is becoming more widely accepted and mainstream through its use by the commercial world, there is still a thin, murky line between what is considered street-urban art and vandalism. So when does street-urban art become vandalism?

To address this question, it is important to define vandalism first as any action involving deliberate damage to or destruction of public or private property. This would imply that any and all forms of unsanctioned art occurring in a public space are, by definition, considered illegal vandalism. Because the very definition of vandalism implies the damage and destruction of property, I would argue that not all forms of street-urban art are vandalism, but only those that lack the intention to stand as a meaningful form of expression. Many works occurring in public space are aimed at aesthetically enhancing their surroundings and sending a message to the passerby. While there is no denying that all unsanctioned works are illegal, they are not necessarily all cases of vandalism.

Graffiti almost always consists of "tagging" and lettering done solely with the use of spray paint. Street-urban art--as it has evolved from graffiti writing--makes use of posters, stickers, paint, chalk, and even yarn and features images, shapes, color and, most importantly, a message. While both graffiti and street-urban artists engage in the battle over public space against those who control it and what it is used for, street-urban art separates itself from graffiti in that it is in more of a dialogue with the city. Instead of an anarchist mentality that damages property as a means to "fight the system," street-urban artists use their work to communicate a

particular message to their audience. It is not my intention with this study to argue what is, and what is not, of artistic value, but instead to explore the graffiti and street-urban art movements as social phenomenon. From my point of view, it is the act of reclaiming the public space to deliver an uncensored message that gives street-urban art form its authority. I believe the biggest issue surrounding the graffiti and street art movements is the struggle for aesthetic control. Visual expression has the power to evoke thought and to instigate action. Unadulterated creative expression that can occur at any time in any space is in direct opposition to those with authority, especially if its message is one that speaks out against or criticizes this authority. New public street-urban artists are engaged in re-configuring the ways in which the neighborhood is read. This reading of a place is not confined to the conceived space of architects and planners, but is also informed by individual actions.

Actually, street-urban art movements encompass, always representing different messages and social segments, many other media and techniques, including the following: LED art, mosaic tiling, stencil art (**fig.8**), sticker art, street installations, wheatpasting, woodblocking, video projection. All these forms continue this resistant relation transition between underground subculture and mainstream art movements. In this study, I suggest that local public arts create new urban meanings by shaping the contextual reading and writing of the city's environment. By manipulating the surfaces of our places, these creators are empowering the relationship between the city and its denizens. This empowerment is done consciously or unconsciously, as well as effectively or ineffectively, but this art form continues to communicate messages in the public arena that are accessible to all, and acts as an instrument for advocacy and an essential element and reflection of the human existence. While street-urban art has become mainstream and

commercialized in certain instances, it remains a vital instrument of protest to bring about social

change for communities of people who have no voice.

Fig. 8   **Bansky**-"What are you looking at?"

2. Theoretical construction. Landscape

"The act of creation is a kind of ritual.

The origins of art and human existence lie hidden in this mystery of creation.

Human creativity reaffirms and mystifies the power of life"

Keith Haring (61)

Even if every person knows what a landscape experience is and even if every citizen knows what urban landscape is, it may be difficult to give a clear-cut definition of landscape experiences. We certainly know that the way we experience the landscape is not just determined by its physical properties. Our experiences can vary, even if the physical properties of the landscape being observed remain constant. Therefore, the landscape experience is not just the result of the physical landscape; on the contrary, landscape experiences are socio-culturally produced by subjects, as I will argue in this part of my dissertation. In this production process, many different cultural factors may influence the outcome, including the particular individual and, at the same time, the social experience that is created, based on the information about the physical landscape as received by the senses of the subject-citizen. Landscape experience has been studied by scholars with different disciplinary backgrounds including social and environmental psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, anthropology, and human geography. Yet, in my view, the way we experience landscapes, and the way we have to approach them has to be greatly influenced by culturally developed meanings. The way an individual experiences nature in landscapes depends on the particular socially shared image he or she has previously acquired. Apart from culturally acquired meanings, the experience of landscape is partly determined by the sense of place that individuals have developed in the course of their lives, which consists of very personal meanings resulting from memories and associations. Using those

ideas as starting points, the aim of this dissertation is to construct a comprehensive theory of urban landscape experience that explains how are produced and how various factors influence the socio-cultural re-action of this production process. It will be a comprehensive, holistic theory that embraces different approaches (artistic, social and cultural) without forgetting the existing disciplinary theories of landscape experience. In fact, I will make use of the traditional theoretical positions about human panoramas, as a fundamental framework, but reinterpreting and adopting these to a different artistic political common denominator. I believe this new approach is necessary because, even if in contemporary culture, as expressed by Manuel Castells, important social processes and functions are shifting from traditional institutions (nation state, religion, local culture, family) towards a diversity of cultural communities (networks of people from the worldwide to the local scale, organized around specific values), our places, our landscapes, urban and not, our city's experiences are increasingly controlled and homogenized. Drawing socio-cultural landscapes, new theories have to be invented and supported in order to re-create concepts upon space, places, and citizens.

Following Manuel Castells's (146) and Marc Auge's (73) idea of *non spaces*[10], the ambivalent space that has none of the familiar attributes of place- for instance, it incites no sense of belonging, we have to create more and more space of places instead of spaces of flows or non-places. If, in fact, the second realities are expressions of western powers' domination of our social life (such as highways, suburban subway stations, airports), on the other hand, real human experiences are related to the space of places (parks, streets, squares). Nowadays, meanings of particular places are often detached from the original place. As Lefebvre suggests, there is a permanent tension between the free appropriation of space for individual and social purposes,

and the domination of space through different forms of social power, such as private property or the state. In a society where citizens live real urban experiences, there is a natural form of tension between the free experience of place, dependent on the personal and collective imagination of the observer, and the domination of place experiences pre-organized and proposed by main stream.

The concept of *genius loci,*[11] which is omnipresent in debates on place and landscape, expresses the idea that places have a unique sense or identity. My approach wants to subvert this traditional state of art based on the built-places phenomenology that moves citizens' senses to an urban-perception phenomenology. Changing this paradigm and refusing global aesthetic mode of production and distribution that affects, by imposing inauthentic or even unreal meanings, a real creation of sensitive places and landscapes, citizens will be an active part of new urban scenarios. Street-urban art provides ongoing signs of environmental reclamation, marking out zones for an alternative human presence and visibility. In conclusion, the aim of my new approaching paradigm is to construct, using urban art expressions as socio-cultural catalyzers, a theory of urban mindscape (the landscape of thoughts, a reification of the domain of imaginary entities, memories, feelings, ideas, fears or any other object in the mind, seen together as making up metaphoric features) experiences seen as active re-action and re-construction of our urban spaces and places.

2.1 From Urban Landscape to Urban Mindscape. Space, Place, and Self: The Art of How Environment Shapes Us.

"The way I look at the landscape is
 forever changed because of street art"[12].

Shepard Fairey

Social processes are changing rapidly, mainly as a result of the momentum of economic growth, technological achievements, and the ever-increasing flood of information. One of the results is that landscape has also changed spatially in radical ways. Indeed, many landscapes and especially urban landscapes in the western world and beyond have changed over recent decades. Studies of the origin and different meanings of the term landscape have revealed different denotations, which make the term conceptually ambiguous. The term sometimes simply refers to a piece of land, to denote the management of the land, the interaction between man and nature, a unit of occupation, or a property. Another set of denotations refers to the landscape as a sensory impression, an aesthetic experience and a pleasing object of depiction. This conceptual ambiguity recurs in the debates on urban landscape quality. In fact, as a consequence of these spatial transformations, the quality of landscape is a focal point in debates on urban landscape and socio-spatial planning. Many spatial changes are rated as negative: people find that they detract from the beauty of the landscape. In chapter 2, to leave no doubt about the real nature of landscape and also to improve the quality of our urban scenarios, I will present my theory about the evolution of urban landscape into urban mindscapes and its inclusion within the core of the international debates about new socio-political-artistic urbanity. Our contemporary society is creating a new urban identity with distinctive forms and with its own aesthetic. Some cities spectacularized traditional areas with marketing functions to attract tourism and leisure; in some

cases, urban spaces are treated as artifacts of the past that are nostalgically restored and returned to an ideal state. This has led to a consequent proliferation of typological models that internalize and privatize public spaces, as expressed by Marc Auge' with the term *non places* that are not related anymore to socio-aesthetic archetypes. My interest is focused especially on the urban public areas as a means of normalizing space, and, on the other hand, as spaces of social re-qualification with the ancient vocation of the human socializing place. Starting with the presentation of the first archetypes of the Greek Ἀγορά (agorá)[13] and the Roman forum, I argue that it is possible to re-write the grammar of the project of the cities and our identities in order to interpret better the complexity of the new hybrid urban social spaces in the sprawled city through the creation of new urban landscapes or streetscapes. Thus the space of the path hybridizes the urban tissue and the rural and natural ground, through different social strategies (in my case I am studying, public, street-urban art) that rewrite the edges of the path as contemporary public urban space.

Public art is, in this sense, not only a quick glance at the urban landscape, but also a place of cultural transition and transmission among citizens, between nomadic and sedentary cultures. Through murals, graffiti, and, in general, street-urban arts and performances, we can combine the perception of different social segments and project new urban promenades that overlap and intersect new social dynamics of flow. Street-urban art creates interventions in which individuals engage in a visual and at times physical interpellation with the existing aesthetics of the urban landscape. These interventions, at their core, are more than a creative play between the artist and the physical city, and could be seen as a change, not only in the street-urban art scene, but also in the relationship between the power of the individual and the aesthetics of the city (**fig.9**).

Fig. 9   **JR**-"Face2Face"

If we were to consider the dialogue of design in the same way we do the linguistic development of a culture's language, then we could say that the street has also developed its own vernacular to fill the gaps in the city's formal design. This new street-level language of design-non-commissioned, non-invited interventions in the urban landscape-transforms the fixed landscape of the city into a platform for a design dialogue. The original "tagging" graffiti, which then matured to the visually representative works of the post-graffiti movement, is in transition again. This genre of visual urban play represents moments when creative expression in the city becomes an urban dialogue challenging the rules of engagement between the individual and the city. What is emerging is not only a new form of street-urban art, but also the opportunity, for

cities, to look to the inherent creativity of urban interventions and to transform their desires in reality building a new human oriented urban design.

Following Guy Debord's statement that "what changes our way of seeing the streets is more important than what changes our way of seeing painting," (62) it is vital that contemporary urbanism itself pay attention to the energy and innovation that can be found in the streets today. Just as online and media culture is being transformed by remix culture and open source approaches, the same thing is happening between the individual and the physical city, and is being led by the latest wave of directly sited street-urban art. Infrastructures and landscapes have to be linked in a bidirectional way, which may lead to new socio-urban projects. Mixing together infrastructural artifacts (roads, highways, railways, walking, cycling trails) with urban spaces (squares, streets, parks) and with artistic urban productions (murals, sculpture, urban performances), we will enrich our social meanings and help create new powerful urban land-mindscapes, understood as a stratified reality and closely linked to human bodies and lives. The space of the cities has always been linked to sociality. For this reason, the present and future space of the connections has to involve the exchange with others, the contact area where one can reach others. The search for new urban mindscape through hybrid urbanities and identities is only possible with a careful reading of the existing perspectives, considering also future urban options. There is a need to change syntax in order to create and write a new recognizable socio-urban paradigm. Contemporary cities are complex and multi-layered, hard to read and interpret, and it is necessary to experiment with narrative approaches that consider relational and procedural aspects of places. Processes, layered like a palimpsest, are the memory of the place and they establish different relationships of continuity and discontinuity between city and city-

users. In this scenario, the answer comes from the deep comprehension of archetypes and mutant archetypes that can lead the project to interact with the complexity of the contemporary spaces. This path can thus be the strong armature for a new kind of public space in the contemporary city. This space will be hybrid and complex, and it will react in different ways with context. Spaces of human and cultural movement have to become a central part of the project, helping to rewrite the urban landscape (I define an urban landscape as the union of the traits, patterns and structure of a city's specific geographic area, including its biological composition, its physical environment and its social patterns) and interacting with existing and new functions that create new urban mindscapes.

My new urban mindscapes, to be understood as an evolution of the idea of mindscapes created originally by Maruyama Magoroh, are inner reality constituted by consciousness or states of mind achieved through social art. Urban mindscape is the landscape as people experience through visual stimuli and can be very personal and social in meanings. Urban mindscape is a system of essentially individual, but unquestionably also collective, values, judgments, feelings, and meanings that are related to the urban landscapes. The urban mindscaping approach is a structure of thinking about a place. An urban mindscape, for example, indicates something that exists between the physical landscape of a city and people's visual and cultural perceptions of it. Mindscape can also mean landscape of the mind. Urban mindscape is, finally, my key word to underline the importance of an interdisciplinary and creative approach to understanding places as complex and multifaceted cultural entities. Our cities' mindscapes, for example, have to become complex and multi-faceted entities. They have to be collectively consolidated, encompassing the following elements: the natural and built environment, including public and open spaces; the

diversity and quality of places where people socialize (including street markets, bars, clubs, cafes and restaurants) local milieu[14] and institutions for intellectual and scientific innovation (including universities and private sector research centers); arts and media activities and institutions; the tangible and intangible heritage (archaeology, local history, dialects, rituals, and gastronomy); the cultures of youth, ethnic minorities and other communities of interest, including local festivals and other celebratory events; the local image bank. According to Franco Bianchini, Director of the Cultural Planning Research Unit, and Programmed Leader for the MA in European Cultural Planning at De Montfort University, Leicester, this image bank consists of local and external images of a city, which are manifested in various forms including: media coverage; stereotypes, jokes and conventional wisdom; representations of a city in music, literature, film, visual arts and other types of cultural production; myths and legends; tourist guidebooks; city marketing and tourism promotion literature; views of residents, city users and outsiders, expressed, for example, through surveys and focus groups" (14).

Jude Bloomfield also highlights:

> "The importance of other components of urban mindscapes, including the following: the special knowledge of environmentally sensitive groups like cyclists (bikescapes) and city walkers (walkscapes); urban symbols and memorabilia, including religious and civic rituals and celebrations; the institutional filters which operate as gatekeepers of collective memory, including local history museums and published histories of the city; the spatial practices of different individuals   and social groups" (45).

A variety of methodologies may be necessary to analyze these resources and their potential applications. For example, for the analysis of local and external perceptions of a place, it may be appropriate to use content analysis or discourse analysis, as well as historical reconstructions of how the image of a locality in film, literature, music, visual arts, and other cultural forms, has evolved. This way of thinking is partly about letting go of traditional roles in

order to utilize everyone's collective knowledge about place. The innovative element here is that of setting in motion a process of dialogue and collaboration between all those who have a stake in the future of the cities before urban renewal. My new approach in comparison with past socio-cultural urban approach is more holistic, interdisciplinary and bilateral. My proposition suggests the need for greater collaboration between policy-makers and urban historians, sociologists, anthropologists, environmentalists, artists, political scientists, psychologists, and last but not least, regular citizens. In other words, new urban mindscapes, new cities regeneration strategies, require regular teamwork and the overcoming of boundaries, both across different academic disciplines, and across the divides between the private, public and voluntary sectors. Urban studies should be more innovative, original and experimental, with a more extensive use of pilot projects, and greater consultation on the possible strategies to be developed through workshops, ideas, competitions, exhibitions, and discussion groups. These would involve citizens of different ages and social backgrounds to build on and identify their mindscapes and imaginaries, and to understand the factors that stimulate or hinder creativity and imagination. In addition, citizens' participation should be more critical, challenging, and questioning. The objective of these strategies should not be to construct a fake consensus by glossing over or denying the existence of real conflicts. Policies in the socio-cultural urban field can be much more effective when they openly acknowledge conflicts, divisions and problems, or when they explore and problematize them further, in an attempt to find a real solution.

Godela Weiss-Sussex argues that "new urbanism should consider the complexity of a city's history as an asset" (23). Urban mindscapes and imaginaries play an important role in cultural and historical continuity, in linking past, present and future. Urban areas should be more

people-centered and humanistic, by celebrating and giving voice to the imagination and the desires of different individuals and communities of interest within the city. Finally, the creation of new mindscape should be more cultured, knowledgeable and critically aware of traditions of cultural expression, by being rooted in research on the history, on the socio-economic realities, on the internal and external image, and on the cultural life and cultural representations of a particular locality. In order to boost, promote and, in a certain way, clarify the social-artistic idea of urban mindscapes, I will briefly describe some "new," maybe utopian or visionary but certainly effective, social scenarios useful to improve our relations with spaces and places: artscape, walkscapes, bikescapes, soundscapes, smellscapes, tastescapes, seascapes…

Artscape:

City revitalization has become an increasing priority for many cities everywhere in the world. Revitalization has included many goals for the city, including beautification, landscaping and street planning, urban parks, and art. Landscapes in the urban environment change from time to time as the needs and uses of the city and its inhabitants change, and the outlooks on what is desired for the city and its appearance vary. Accepting this process, we have to ask ourselves: can we humanize urban spaces through new public arts? Can we do it in a collective way? It is necessary, if we want to rebuild our urban mindscapes through urban expressions, to answer these questions and to find the ways to govern and to promote urban spaces, directly, with local democracy. Public urban arts facilitate the creation of a communal identity and character that can be representative of the city and its people. Sculpture, memorials, monuments, fountains, and murals are placed in public places to display historical meaning, cultural significance, and city beautification. Public plazas offer the pedestrian a place to gather, relax, enjoy the sites, and play. These places often incorporate art, decoration, and land-art-scape features to make the place beautiful and give it character.

Art gives the urban area a sense of place. I believe that through urban arts, performances (**fig.10-11**), and flash mob events, for example, citizens will transform a daily life urban space into a space in progress, a χώρα (chôra), "the very place of an infinite resistance, of an infinitely impassible persistence, resistance," (88) as expressed by Jacques Derrida. Through the arts, we can re-create an urban alchemy where people, with their imagination and bodies, will provide unique socio-cultural elements that will appeal to residents, visitors and businesses. My goal is to connect socio-political and personal, community life, global and local ecological issues, to

celebrate the values of community-based self-determination, collective action, and art as functional part of everyday life. Public art identifies the city, displaying persons and events in history by use of historic monuments. Public art and monuments promote social gathering and interaction. The work of art usually attracts people closer to the object, and often offers a place to sit with or meet others. The art automatically becomes an identifiable point in the urban environment. It is, in this sense, that most works of public art are found in public plazas or parks where the site is more suitable for such gatherings.

Many times, these sites, found in the heart of the city include monuments that symbolize the history of the place, or fountains and sculpture that demonstrate a celebration of place. These objects are seen as attractions to visitors and local citizens alike. The urban environment can become personalized with art by demonstrating a particular style, activity, or culture. Art creates a sense of place; it reflects social theory about the place, and displays a style that is attributed to the space. Art is often used in public places to give it character, to make a space interesting, or to simply beautify it. People often remember a place because of the artwork that exists in the space- the art acts as a symbol of the place. Public art contributes to the process of place making.

Fig. 10   **Tijuana**-Centro Cultural de Arte
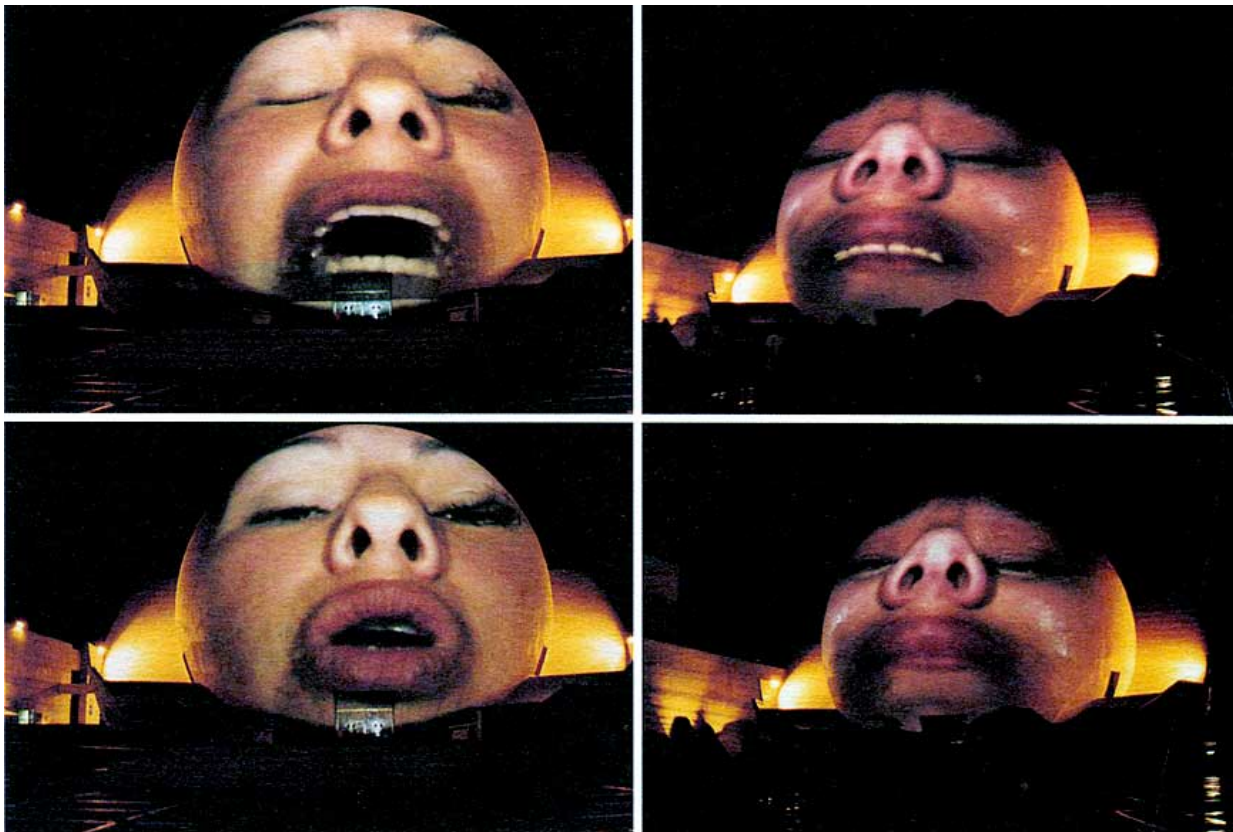
Fig. 11   **Krzysztof Wodiczko**-"The Tijuana Projection"

Walkscapes:

"Man's real home is not a house, but the Road,
and that life itself is a journey to be walked on foot."

Bruce Chatwin

The idea of walking through spaces and places, leaving a mark and receiving different sensorial stimuli is a way to create new mindscapes. As expressed by Lucius Burckhardt in the 1980s at the University of Kassel, strolling or, in German, *Spaziergangswissenschaft* (knowledge about moving through space), is inseparable from human perceptions and its feedback informs our city planning and building (9).

In this way, as expressed in *Walkscapes* by Francesco Careri: "walking becomes an autonomous form of art, a primary act in the symbolic transformation of the territory, an aesthetic instrument of knowledge and a physical transformation of the "negotiated" space, which is converted into an urban intervention"(75). This type of aware walking that creates an active participation in city life is a sort of autonomous form of art, a primary act in the symbolic transformation of our urban environment. This alternative way of interacting actively with the rich life of urban spaces and places (as opposed to the passive consumer citizen), and among ourselves facilitates a new perception of landscape.

Creating urban mindscapes or new walkscapes, and using in a different way our mind offers us a re-reading of the history of art. As nomads, Dadaists, Surrealists, Situationist, Minimalists and Land Artists did in the past, I believe that walking has to become a normal urban way of life and an aesthetic tool capable of modifying metropolitan spaces so that they can be filled with meanings rather than things. Just walking in a different way can radically alter our perception of

landscape, and especially of urban landscape. Through a new history, of traversed cities and lives, cityscapes change from time to time as the needs and uses of the city change. Accepting this process, we may look for ways to humanize urban spaces through public arts. It can be done in a collective and democratic way in order to rebuild our urban mindscapes through urban expressions.

Fig. 12   **Anonymous Artist-**"Walkscape Stencil"

<u>Bikescapes:</u>

As cities have become increasingly motivated to be more sustainable, cycling has become integral in these plans. My idea of bikescaping considers a socio-artistic approach to urban and human investigations: we can view bikeways as a technology of power that has to be supported in order to transform social interaction in the city. The "Pedaling Revolution" (Mapes 1) was initially made out of convenience rather than political motivation, but the more cities we saw from our bicycle, the more we came hooked on this mode of transport and the sense of liberation, exhilaration, and connection it provided. Cycling is related to historically constituted materialities, subjectivities, identities, reproductive and productive labor, family, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, aesthetics, and everyday experiences of fear and safety.

In this way, cycling is hardly an individualized act: "It is well and good to understand how bike lanes work, and how they can be mobilized in this context, but we need to establish efforts that reach beyond material infrastructure and access" (Herr 117). This point of view, from our bike seat, became our panoramic window on urban life, a magical way of opening one's eyes to the inner workings and rhythms of a city's geography and population. Clear example of this different approach to cities and to creating new urban mindscapes is the Critical Mass (**fig.13**): a monthly bicycle ride to celebrate cycling and to assert cyclists' right to the road. The idea started in San Francisco in September 1992 and quickly spread to cities all over the world. Critical Mass has no leaders, and no central organization licenses rides. In every city that has a Critical Mass ride, some locals simply picked a date, time, and location for the ride and publicized it. Critical Mass, therefore, is an idea and an event, not an organization. The bikescape discourse of inclusivity that advocates for the inclusion of cycling as an option for travel on city streets and

for the inclusion of many different kinds of cyclist, is a project of creating a new norm that maintains multiplicity and offer new perspective in the way we interact with our urban environment.

Fig. 13   **Anonymous Artist-**"Critical Mass Stencil"

Soundscapes, Smellscapes, Tastescapes, Seascapes…

Urban spaces are important loci of social contact, their physical and symbolic properties having a profound effect on everyday interactions. These sites are frequently subject to physical interventions enacted for a range of aesthetic, social, political and economic purposes. Yet, while urban art can have transformative effects on the cityscape and in the development of urban cultures, the relationships between our bodies, sense, and the public sphere represents a contested ground. Being part of a different urban experience, whose main purpose is being an active part of our cities, it suggests exposing our human senses to every urban stimuli around us no matter where we are. For example

"there is room for much innovation and experimentation on how design, architecture and the use of different materials and different types of plant species and other organisms may together create a new type of sound environment -not just noise reduction and not just natural sounds, but the creation of a hybrid sound environment that is the signature of what is urban"[15].

We may be at home, we may be walking across a downtown street, through a park, along the beach (seascapes); we may be shopping in a supermarket, a department store, or a ethnic grocery store (smellscapes and tastescape); we may be standing at the airport, the train station, the bus-stop (soundscapes) (**fig.14**); wherever we go we have to give our senses priority. Citizens can create a new sensorial urban geography understanding the smells of the city, listening to its noises, grasping the messages, and becoming aware of its socio-cultural materials. Creating a new urban sensorial *Zeitgeist* (Shafer 65), we will think of our city as a living work of art where citizens can get involved and engage themselves in the creation of a transformed place.

Focusing on human -collective and personal- and urban sensoriality and changing our urban mindset we create an ethical framework to drive the city forward and not in a prescriptive sense. At its core, this ethic is about something life giving, sustaining, and opening out rather than curtailing. This requires us to try, as much as possible to become open minded nurturing our city lives and our cultural ecology.

Fig. 14   **Todo por la Praxis**-"Sound System Guerrilla"

2.2 From Urban Landscape to Urban Mindscape: a survey

"Los graffitis no ensucian las paredes.

Limpian las mentes."

Julio Cortázar (125)

Fig. 15   **Anonymous Artist-Boston-**"Urban Survey" [16]

To improve my work and to give a unique sociological perspective to my study, I decided

to create a survey, related to street-urban art, and to provide it to a sample represented by people

of all ages. The survey was sent to a hundred people. I used three different kinds of platforms,

spreading out, as much as possible, my questions; the first was surveymonkey.com, one of the

most popular online survey servers; the second one Facebook, the biggest social media, through

which I could contact urban artists, urban festivals and regular people all over the world; the third one was represented by the University of California, Merced community, including professors, graduate and undergraduate students, and workers.

Through this survey, I want to underline the social impact of urban and street art in order to examine this form of popular culture, popular communication, and popular spatial resistance that, in my view, connects cities and the people in them. Different cultural studies approaches assert that street art serves not only as a medium for self-expression, but also as a means for reclaiming public spaces, communicating to the masses, and forming local and global social networks. The results of the survey, as will be seen, confirm it. Analyzing the survey's answers coming from different social environments (including big cities and small communities, or different continents), I tried to support my position by arguing that street art can form inter-city networks including multi-local popular resistance.

Empirical social network analysis is used to demonstrate this global urban network of street art and to discuss its properties and wider implications. The survey data confirm the existence of global urban networks based on sub-cultural practices, thus suggesting an important new way of looking at global city networks, which may reveal the potential for other such studies. I believe that in a world where for the first time more than half of its population lives in cities, there may be no more universal human space than urban streets. And these are public spaces, the people's spaces. Cities and their streets are the ultimate arena for mass cultural production and popular cultural creation.

The premise of my thesis and of this investigation, confirmed by many survey answers, is that, throughout the years, street art has evolved, becoming an artistic movement blanketing the walls of cities around the world in its various forms. The art form continues to communicate messages in the public arena that are accessible to all, acting as an instrument for advocacy and an essential element and reflection of the human existence. It remains a vital instrument of protest to bring about social change for communities of people who have no voice. While street art has become mainstream and commercialized in certain instances, the art form offers a visual expression of protest that empowers those who cannot be silenced any longer, and however brief—the shift of power is too great to be ignored.

2.3. Questionnaire Introduction

I introduced my questionnaire in this way:

Hello there,

I have been enjoying and studying street and urban arts for the past twenty years and now I am trying to find new ideas and suggestions. My new analysis is based on aesthetic and social research, enriched with surveys and interviews on the economic, political and cultural context of street and urban arts, considering its multidisciplinary nature, social and urban involvement as well as its public. For this reason, I would like to invite you to complete my short questionnaire. It is anonymous and the material gathered will only be used for non-commercial academic purposes. Furthermore, if you decide at any point before the publication of this research that you no longer wish your material to be used, I will withdraw it from the research.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6RZ7TLH

2.4. Questionnaire

The ten questions I suggested are:

1) Do you approve of street art? Do you enjoy seeing street art?

2) Are you happier seeing street art when it is not in your own neighborhood?

3) Does the presence of street art give you positive or negative feelings about an area?

4) Do you think it would be a good thing to give street artists more freedom to create where they want to?

5) What makes a place special?

   a) The landscape? Explain why?

   b) The social use? Explain why?

   c) The memories of the place? Explain why?

   d) The beauty of the place? Explain why?

   e) Others. Explain?

6) Street Art… (choose an or various option)

   a) Is aesthetically pleasing.

   b) Improves the visual quality of our cities.

   c) Compliments the architectural style and aesthetic of our cities.

   d) Stimulates intellectual thought/discussion.

   e) Intellectually challenges the observer.

   f) Increases the visibility of cities.

7) Can a public space be interpreted and understood, through street art, in a different way?

    a) Yes. Explain why?

    b) No. Explain why?

8) Can street art works facilitate shared meanings and understandings between peoples?

9) Do you know of any artists who practice street art?

    a) Yes. Who?

    b) No.

10) Can street art help us pass from an urban landscape (the traits, patterns and structure of a city's specific geographic area) to an urban mindscape (the landscape of thoughts, a reification of the domain of imaginary entities, memories, feelings, ideas, fears)?

    a) Yes. Explain why?

    b) No. Explain why?

2.5. Questionnaire answers statistics

1) Do you approve of street art? Do you enjoy seeing street art?

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers
Yes. Explain why?	76%
No. Explain why?	23%

2) Are you happier seeing street art when it's not in your own neighborhood?

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers
Yes. Explain why?	48%
No. Explain why?	51%

3) Does the presence of street art give you positive or negative feelings about an area?

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers

Yes. Explain why?   63%

No. Explain why?   36%

4) Do you think it would be a good thing to give street artists more freedom to create where they want to?

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers
Yes. Explain why?	76%
No. Explain why?	23%

5) What makes a place special?

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers
a) The landscape? Explain why?	44%
b) The social use? Explain why?	28%
c) The memories of the place? Explain why?	16%
d) The beauty of the place? Explain why?	9%
e) Others. Explain?	2%

6) Street Art...

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers
a) Is aesthetically pleasing.	32%
b) Improves the visual quality of our cities.	16%
c) Compliments the architectural style and aesthetic of our cities.	9%
d) Stimulates intellectual thought/discussion.	11%
e) Intellectually challenges the observer.	9%
f) Increases the visibility of cities.	12%

7) Can a public space be interpreted and understood, through street art, in a different way?

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers
Yes. Explain why?	87%
No. Explain why?	12%

8) Can street art works facilitate shared meanings and understandings between people?

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers

Yes. Explain why?   74%

No. Explain why?   25%

9) Do you know of any artists who practice street art?

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers
Yes. Who?	39%
No.	60%

10) Can street art help us pass from an urban landscape (the traits, patterns and structure of a city's specific geographic area) to an urban mindscape (the landscape of thoughts, a reification of the domain of imaginary entities, memories, feelings, ideas, fears)?

Responded: 99

Omitted: 1

Answer's options	Answers
Yes. Explain why?	73%
No. Explain why?	26%

2.6. Most impacting Questionnaire Responses

In this section, I share, maintaining grammar errors-naïve ideas, the most impacting questionnaire responses to understand better the various samples with which I worked, to analyze the responses from different perspectives, and to illuminate the complexity of the street-urban art world.

Question 1: Do you approve of street-urban art? Do you enjoy seeing street-urban art?

- Yes, sure. I really love and enjoy street-urban art. I personally have different reasons for liking that. In my society, I feel it is very necessary to have it. I think it is more effective and it can introduce art to people, to be always in street for all people, not in close place for a few people, to be very big, and change the color of city. specially in Afghanistan, we really need to change and recover bad memories of war from every wall and to recover all bad memories and bad elements of war from every body's mind. It can be a reason of happiness, also it is a good way to share ideas and messages with all people

- Yes. It's an excellent way of twisting normal peoples minds.

- Street art is like a breath of fresh air. It can provoke discussion and emotions that we would probably put at the back of our mind otherwise. It's good to be moved.

- It is always an eye openner, and sometimes the art contains some hidden meaning regarding society.

- I connect with my son through streetart, since I am a single parent and sometimes combine my hobby with my young. My Artist Name; SE!ROS78 - is a Combo of Father&Son'ART in the field of Street !

Question 2: Are you happier seeing street-urban art when it's not in your own neighborhood?

- I like seeing street art wherever it might be, especially in my own neighbourhood, but anywhere is great!

- Art is an adventure - can make you happy

Question 3: Does the presence of street-urban art give you positive or negative feelings about an area?

- Because it makes this area more alive, more colorful and sometimes tells some stories about the area itself

- I appreciate that walls are used as a place to express ideas/opinions/dreams etc

Question 5: What makes a place special?

- I think that governments should encourage the artists to do it. But I think the artists must do it by theirselves too, because street art is intervention - the unexpected is a keyword.

- I think that there should be a dialogue between street artists, citizens and municipalities on where and why it is important to express themselves through street art. In other words, it would be important that people commonly recognize street art as a form of art, first of all

- Not necessarily. It could be a cool thing of course, but one of the reasons why I like street art is this "breaking the rules" thing. That's part of the deal. But indeed, it's cool when sometimes "street art" is getting consideration. Nevertheless, I've seen the Street Art exhibition in Paris which takes place those days, and it almost didn't touch me at all. It was like seeing caged animals in a zoo. I prefer to see a free basic bird, than pay to see a beautiful caged bird.

Question 6: Street-urban Art… (choose an or various option)

- The social use? Explain why? If i am paying taxes, then i should be allowed to use all spaces, or have spaces for self expression

- The Memories of the place? Explain why? Yes, because it's history. So they create a narrative of identity (ies) and tell stories about the place, the feelings, the perception of this area/city. Street art is a particular memory of the place, interesting because of the evolution of the images that are represented one on the other, that makes the memory dynamic (compared to static historical monuments)

- a combination of natural , structural and architectural beauty added with unconventional interventions which represent the local human identity

Question 8: Can street-urban art works facilitate shared meanings and understandings between peoples?

- i feel that after these all ideas about street art , after different reasons , behind them it is also a mental thing , it is like a part of our life that we should have it , and without it every thing is looking uncompleted , lots people are crossing from behind of every graffiti wall and street art, without thinking too much about them , but those street art could full the empty place of art in their psyche and soul from psychological side

- Put a overfilled shopping trolley into a bank. Outside there are maybe some homeless refugees from africa. Many customers will thing about it for some seconds. After they get back to their consume bubble and don't give a shit about reality like the usually do.

- Sreet art can express social claims in a very visual way that in other circumstances could not been visible

- yes, i feel that street art provided a more in depth look at the thought dreams, and ideas of its inhabitants. Coming into a city and seeing a mural displaying the history of the people that might live there, gives you a better understanding of its potential values, people, and a sense of respect for that community. It provides insight.

Question 9: Do you know of any artists who practice street-urban art?

- yes , some of my students " Afghanistan

Question10: Can street-urban art help us to pass from an urban landscape (the traits, patterns and structure of a city's specific geographic area) to an urban mindscape (the landscape of thoughts, a reification of the domain of imaginary entities, memories, feelings, ideas, fears)?

- *This imagery instigates us to reflect about it and their connection to the urban space.*

- *A lot depends on the interaction and dialogue between city & artist. if you can paint walls legally, you have more time for better quality, if you have illegal work that's beautiful, the city can legalize it or remove and prosecute. how far are you willing to go? in this city we had artists convicted, but also organisations that vandalised graffiti and street art works. it's a fine line. the important things is you have an openminded city and open minded artists.*

- *yes, certainly, it can bring out the emotional content of an area and give us a place to reflect, filter and expand our ideas*

- *yes. with freedom of our mind we can share, see, feel, and learn from others. and escape the monotony of life and its troubles.*

- *Absolutely, our everyday images create a state of mind.*

2.7. List of some urban artists and citizens that answered the questionnaire

Even if one of the most important characteristics of the survey was anonymity, especially using Facebook, I came into contact with some of the world's most important urban artists. In order to have a real social segment, instead of just street art and urban art sympathizers, I used only twenty-five of them, so the 25 percent of my sample, trying to have a balanced survey. I decided to include a list of them in the thesis to stress the street-urban art global, having received answer from the five continents, impact:

1) Space Invaders - Invader (Paris): www.space-invaders.com
2) Moxz (Bolivia):https://www.facebook.com/moxz321
3) Jaz (Argentina):http://graffitimundo.com/artists/jaz/
4) Spaik (Mexico): https://www.facebook.com/spaik45
5) Robbbb (China): http://robbbb.com/
6) Morran Ben Lahcen (Morocco): http://www.behance.net/morran
7) Yantr (India): http://graffitiinindia.com/tag/yantr/
8) Astronautboys (Indonesia): http://astronautboys.deviantart.com/
9) Fintan Magee (Australia): http://www.fintanmagee.com/
10) Flowerguy – Michael De Feo (New York): www.mdefeo.com/
11) Buff Monster - Random (Los Angeles.): www.buffmonster.com
12) Swoon (New York): www.wearechangeagent.com/swoon/#
13) Pez (Barcelona): http://lawebdelpez.com/
14) D*Face (London): www.stolenspace.com/
15) Kenji Hirata (Nagasaki-New York): www.kenjihirata.com/
16) Frangipani Gallery (Tokyo): www.frangipani.info/gallery/TokyoStreetArt
17) Bosso fataka (Germany): http://bossofataka.com/
18) Collateral.al (Italy): http://www.collater.al/
19) Street Minotaur (USA): http://www.streetminotaur.com/
20) Jacek Wozniak (France): http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacek_Wo%C5%BAniak
21) Dolk (Norway): http://dolk.blogspot.com/
22) Roadsworth (Canada): http://roadsworth.com/home/
23) Borondo (Spain): http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/borondo
24) BLU (Italy): http://www.blublu.org
25) Os Gêmeos (Brazil): http://www.osgemeos.com.br/

2.8. Survey Conclusion

Taking into account that the concept of the city has come to play a central role in the practices of future generation and trying to find a resolution to the debate among residents of modern cities about street-urban art, considered by some to be a natural expression that exercises a collective right to the city, and by others as a destructive attack upon an otherwise clean and orderly society, in this section I draw a conclusion of all the survey information obtained. This research focuses on various forms of street art from the perspective of the urban audience. The general aim is to further an understanding of how people interact with and respond to street art. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered analyzing one-hundred surveys. Survey respondents distinguished between street art forms, generally preferring installations and masterpieces, over tagging and stickers. More respondents considered graffiti to be a form of artistic expression, rather than an act of vandalism.

Participant observations indicated that purposefully-designed street art can promote interaction between people, art, and public space. Random urban spectators became active collaborators, using art and performance to express themselves in public. These findings indicate that there is a need to reconsider zero tolerance graffiti policies. Overall, these findings also contribute to a more informed discussion regarding the regulation, acceptability, and possibilities of unauthorized artistic expression in cities. At the beginning of this project, I had two main hypotheses: the first one was that urban art could help many artists and also, as confirmed by the answers to questions number 3-8 and 9, help urban areas to achieve a better future; the second one was that the fact that street art is not exhibited in galleries and museums does not mean that

it is not art. After having completed all the research, I can not only confirm and go deeper into these two hypotheses, but also pose new questions and provide new answers throughout the entire process. This survey, as well as the rest of the dissertation, has asserted that the relation between street-urban art and cities is based on a real connectivity, and that street-urban art, with its essential tactic of visually reimagining public space, represents the best cultural and social production to promote the interaction between cities and their citizens. The answers to questions 8-10 underline the idea that street-urban art is a form of popular culture that helps create social communication occurring in many locations at the same time, each one distinct, and yet all with important similar practices, forms, and imagery.

This process finally contributes to a worldwide expression of popular existence and resistance against the massive influence of commercial mainstream. As Tristan Manco (8) observes, street-urban art has grown from humble beginnings to become a modern global network useful to help us pass from an urban landscape (the traits, patterns and structure of a city's specific geographic area) to an urban mindscape (the landscape of thoughts, a reification of the domain of imaginary entities, memories, feelings, ideas, fears) as expressed by the 73 percent of positive responses to question number 10. During my project, I have met many artists, either by seeing some of their artworks or by reading something about their artistic production. It has helped me understand more about their art, and it has made me realize that there is a sort of common social origin reflected in their artwork.

To sum up this survey, the broached questions were very useful in gaining a better understanding of the way in which street-urban art can form global and glocal networks: cultural

connections between the world's major cities, their citizens and artist have to be improved in order to become just as powerful as economic connections. Through the survey's analysis, and keeping in mind the 76 percent of positive answers to question number 1 and the 63 percent of positive answers to question number 3, I want to demonstrate the real connectivity created by city artist and city users, which can create a successful partnership among arts, culture and urban-human regeneration. Furthermore, my research shows that street-urban art messages tend to reflect shared attitudes and values. Through my cross-cultural investigation, I also found that recently there has been an undeniable shift in the public and social impact of street-urban art and graffiti culture, and a dramatic transformation (see question 9-10). Street-urban art, in this context, offers a prime example of urban art that emerges as a response to major political and social crises and upheavals. In conclusion, I can confirm that street-urban art has enabled artists to create language and symbols that provide city and citizens with meaningful new identifiers that redefine political discourse (question 6-7).

3. Case Studies

3.1. Art and Power: Mexican and Italian Muralism.

 "Mural painting must help
in a person's struggle to become a human being"

Diego Rivera (13)

Fig. 16   http://www.uia.mx/actividades/agenda

In this chapter I compare, despite the political differences, the artistic and semiotic similarities between the Mexican and Italian mural movements. Many research have been conducted on Mexican muralism,[17] and on the most important Mexican murals painters--David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, and Diego Rivera (**fig.17**), but to my knowledge, these two artistic productions, Mexican and Italian muralism, have never been compared using political factors as a common denominator. Comparing early twentieth-century Mexican and Italian muralism reveals not only the murals' techniques, styles, and themes, but also the political and social contexts out of which these phenomena emerged. It also shows the evolution of

political public art, such as the one represented by Chicano/a murals and provides the theoretical

tools to analyze the ruptures represented by Street-Urban art.

Fig.17.   **F. *ENUF* Garcia** -"Los tres grandes" [18]

The project "Art and Power: the construction of national identity in Mexican and Italian

murals"-sponsored by the Mexican Government's Secretary of External Relations and the Italian

government's Ministry of Education began in 2004. It was done in collaboration with the

Institute of Aesthetic Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (under the

supervision of Dr. Renato González Mello), the Art History Department of the Universidad Iberoamericana of Mexico City (Dr. Francisco López Ruiz). The project has two principal objectives: to analyze the close relationship between art and power during the post-revolutionary period in Mexico and the Fascist era in Italy, and to create an analysis of the artistic and content similarities of both movements, which, in my view, created a symbolic "common" code.

This work will be also part of a larger project aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of these artistic movements. Italian muralism, in fact, includes some of the most recognized and historically significant artists of the era. Approximately half of the hectares of murals painted remain today. Yet in spite of this artistic production's great relevance, until recently it has not received enough critical attention. To develop the "Art and Power" research, it was necessary to begin studying the relationship between the Mexican post-revolutionary political establishment and the Italian Fascist socio-political situation.

The Mexican Revolution, "begun in 1910 in opposition to the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, evolved into a violent social revolution that lasted throughout the following decade, taking the lives of close to a million Mexican people" (Vaughan and Lewis 4). Almost immediately in 1920:

> politicians, intellectuals, and artists joined forces not only to recover from the economic and social devastation of the war, but also to redefine Mexico's national identity. Through the establishment of new schools, libraries, and museums, the support for popular festivals and traditions, and the patronage of large-scale public art (**fig.18**), they attempted to unite members of diverse social classes under a uniquely Mexican culture (Sussman 23).

Fig. 18   **Diego Rivera**-"Historia de México"[19]

The Mexican *renacimiento* (renaissance) or cultural rebirth drew its themes from Mexico's indigenous cultures and used the Italian Renaissance as a historical model. "Unlike the Italian Renaissance, however, the cultural rebirth of Mexico was closely tied to a political rebirth" (Sussman 37). In Italy, the situation was totally different: in 1922, Benito Mussolini and his Fascist followers marched through the streets of Rome, symbolically marking the beginning of the dramatic twenty years *dittatura* of the National Fascist Party over Italy. Using a multi-faceted propaganda campaign (radio, newspapers, photography, and public art), the regime attempted to create, through a symbolic appropriation of classical, especially Roman, and Renaissance, symbols, a national image that represented Italy as a strong and united nation.

There are numerous examples of State intervention within the artistic realm or as a form of political propaganda. The first clear example of this phenomenon is encountered in the era of Roman Emperor Augustus, who utilized art to mystify his political power. His efforts were not in vain, as Mussolini did not hesitate in making himself the new Augustus (**fig.19**).

Fig. 19   **Angelo Canevari**-"Duce: saluto romano"

The architecture and the images reflect the state of a society and its values as well as its periods of crisis and moments of euphoria. Every transformation of a political system produces a new language in the form of images that somehow reflect the mentality of the time. They also

construct an essential vehicle in this transformation. These images are perceived as political messages aimed at highlighting the virtues and values of a political icon. In this sense, the form and the "style" of a piece in itself can be considered a complex historical document.

As indicated by Dr Alicia Azuela, in her book *Arte y Poder...* (Art and Power), "el fenómeno artístico del muralismo mexicano se gesta en el ámbito de lo social, lo político y lo cultural, y es allí donde incide y se renueva..." (203).[20] As expressed in Walter Benjamin's major work "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," "fascism can be seen as a form of aestheticized politics in which aesthetics issues permeated all aspects of society; and the political, economic, and cultural realms should not be considered separately when discussing fascism" (68). The task, then, is first, to discover the complex relationships between social political trasformation of images; second, to expand the analysis to the total visual communication system. It is also important to study the relationships between images and their effect on the citizen–observer. The symbolic world of images, analyzed in this manner, reflects the internal state of a society and allows us to obtain an idea of the values proposed and received; the power of the images materializes lastly in the interaction between the creator and his or her relationship with hegemonic forces (normally the state) and recipient (the people).

It is precisely the analysis of this cultural production from a dual perspective and focusing on these two eras, post-revolutionary Mexico and fascist Italy, that purports to discover the semiotic–stylistic relationship between art (the channel) and power (turned into emissary through the artist). Therefore, in this study, I identify the stylistic similarities and differences between both artistic movements, keeping in mind historical and political differences. It is

important to stress that the process of politicization, through art, of the Mexican society continuously changed, because of various political government renovations, whilst in Italy, during the Fascism, was more continual and unidirectional. In both countries, however, murals served as instruments of the State used to transmit ideas through symbols. The idea was to win the faith of the populous through a visual sublimation of power.

The points of contact between art and power in Mexico and Italy are numerous and further reaching. First, the influence of political figures such as José María Vasconcelos[21] and Giuseppe Bottai,[22] which from a centralized position, foster a culture of Nation and Revolution (Vasconcelos) and of State and Country (Bottai); second, the use of collage: "the battle between fascism and communism has an aesthetic correlate in the closed order of an organic form and the fragmentary dynamism of collage (203); third, the massive propaganda created using photos, postcards, pamphlets; fourth, the innumerable cultural contacts between artists from both countries (I refer, for example, to the influence of Italian Renaissance Art on Diego Rivera's work; to the strong connection between Siqueiros and the text of Gino Severini's "Del cubismo al clasicismo" [from Cubism to Classicism]); fifth, to the undeniable relationship seen in the futuristic works of De Chirico and Siqueiros; sixth, to the relationship between art and poetry expressed in the cohesion between Italian muralism and Futurism. To quote Marinetti:

> "la forza comunicativa della pittura murale viene vista come "l'espressione plastica dello spirito fascista", uno specchio edonistico della magnificenza del regime, che deve riprodurre attraverso le tecniche grafiche la maestosità e l'imponenza della dittatura. L'arte così tornerà a essere quello che fu nei suoi periodi più alti e in seno alle più alte civiltà: un perfetto strumento di governo spirituale.[23]

Following these cultural and political connections between Mexico and Italy, and between Art and Power, we cannot forget the relationship between Mexican *Estridentista* poets, including, among others, Manuel Maples Arce, Arqueles Vela, Germán List Arzubide, and the Mexican muralist movement. In fact, in November 1986, volume eight of *Horizonte*, the group's magazine, included illustrations by Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, among other plastic artists, along with various articles highlighting the influence of the revolution on art, and education, and society. The complex historical periods in both countries present, with various types of evidence, not only a change in the political structure, but also, a change in the understanding of artistic production. In this quotation, Walter Benjamin argues: "Fiat ars, pereat mundus, dice el fascismo, y espera del estado moderno, la satisfacción artística de la percepción sensorial modificada por la técnica. Este es el esteticismo de la política que el fascismo propugna. El comunismo le contesta con la politización del arte"(15)[24] Because of the vast body of research material and public biography regarding the cultural and political contact points relationships mentioned, I prefer to concentrate on the two principle objectives previously stated:

1. Analysis of the close relationship between Art and Power.
2. Comparison of works by Mexican and Italian muralists, and analysis of similarities, artistic level and content, highlighting the creation of "common" symbolic coding.

By providing evidence of the common cultural and political relationships between the two countries, we can assert that there are two major elements in the relationship between art and power:

1. On the one hand, we have the instances of political or economic power's patronage of art. In Mexico, because the revolution had diminished the possibilities of a market or non-government patrons, artists had to sell their art to the State; in Italy, because Mussolini's dictatorship quickly understood the expressive and communicative power of art, it

blocked every expressive space that could be offered as a unique context of creation and cultural promotion.

2. On the other hand, the connections between art and power in Mexico and Italy force the creation produce an element of a new cultural identity, vindicating for the artist themselves, and for the dominating political groups, creating a new national and identitarian symbology.

The result of these commonalities is represented by:

A. A redefinition of the structures of power and an artistic legitimization of the new political order. In the case of Italy, it was achieved thanks to a complicated allegory referring to the qualities and function of the unique leader: Benito Mussolini. In the Mexican case, it was achieved thanks to popular, didactical themes linked to the political discourse of the moment.

B. The true creation of public art sponsored by the state with the formation of:
   a. a community of beliefs, sentiment, and universal images.
   b. a masculinist vision of the world.

In both Mexico and Italy there is a reaction against modern art and a turn to a didactic art that is used to indoctrinate people and, above all, to transmit the ideals of the new State. It is precisely this intent to create a meta-history[25] and the transmission of predetermined values that closes the gap between these two movements with other forms of public art: for example, the epic art of the Pharaohs, Italian imperialism, Byzantine art, Italian Renaissance art, or Soviet and Nazi propagandist. As Octativo Paz states in his book *El privilegio de la vista*, "el arte público no deja de ser un arte estatal y dinástico, voluntad de los estados e iglesias; fue y es un testimonio de la unanimidad que imponen las ortodoxias religiosas y políticas" (55).[26]

Both States see, in artistic production, the path towards the construction of a revolutionary nationalism, establishing fetishes that are to be venerated and converted into national cults. The artistic production in both countries looks to reinforce the concept of nation and history, creating a past and guiding it towards the future.

In Mexico, as indicated by Saúl Járez:

> el período comprendido entre 1910 y 1955 tiene en la Revolución, como lucha armada, primero, y forma de gobierno, después, su figura central. Uno de los retos que debe enfrentar a partir de 1917, época en la que comenzó su consolidación, fue el de buscar los medios idóneos para difundir sus contenidos en el seno de una población en la que el analfabetismo era la norma (29)[27]

The revolutionary period within 1910-1955 understood the revolution first as armed battle and second as a form of government. One of the goals that after 1917, the era that began its consolidation, was to find the appropriate means to disseminate content for a mostly illiterate population. In Mexico, the chosen means were the great murals on public buildings on which the main ideologies of the revolutionary struggle were plastered. Something similar happened in Italy during the fascist dictatorship: murals were used to transmit and promote fascist ideals to a population that was not entirely supportive of the political regime of the time. Both powers saw in public arts, and particularly in murals, the most direct and appropriate vehicle of expression. They considered the painted mural the perfect medium to express the universal values related to the country's history. "La pintura mural mexicana", according to Renato González Mello, "fue la pintura de historia del Siglo XX en México. Y es hasta cierto punto conservadora, se ve en la obra de los muralistas un intento estrictamente pedagógico, propagandístico y, en suma eminentemente público" (341).[28]

Fascist mural paintings were created to transmit values. Epic and popular art, which was anti-experimental, had social and educational goals. In both contexts, the role of the artist changed, becoming socio-political worker-artisans. Tellingly, there are interesting coincidences between "Manifesto della pittura murale" and "Manifiesto del Sindicato de Obreros Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores". In the first we read:

> "L'attuale rifiorire della pittura murale, facilita l'impostazione del problema dell'arte fascista. Infatti: sia la pratica destinazione della pittura murale, sia le leggi che la governano, sia il prevalere in essa dell'elemento stilistico su quello emozionale, sia la sua intima associazione con l'architettura, vietano all'artista di cedere all'improvvisazione e ai facili virtuosismi". (23),[29]

The second proclaims:

> "...repudiamos la pintura llamada de caballete y exaltamos las manifestaciones de arte monumental por ser de utilidad pública. Proclamamos que toda manifestación estética ajena o contraria al sentimiento popular es burguesa y debe desaparecer porque contribuye a pervertir el gusto de nuestra raza, ya casi completamente pervertido en las ciudades". (1923, *Manifiesto del Sindicato de Obreros Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores*, firmado por David Alfaro Siqueiros, Xavier Guerrero, Fermín Revueltas, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco-**fig.20**- y Carlos Mérida).

Fig. 20   **F. *ENUF* Garcia**-"Los tres grandes"[30]

Both texts highlight the national and formative properties of the work itself, while still acknowledging the aesthetic value. Mural painting, in both cases, produce messages that will make people aware of new sociopolitical reality. It is, in other words, an instrument of public education, which was progressive in the Mexican case and conservative in the Italian case. Mexican muralism emphasizes content. It transmits the artist's (or the government's) values to the people. It is an artistic education with social commitment to the liberation of the oppressed. By contrast, in Italy the idea was to make the viewer adopt the emissary's ideals. In both cases art is utilized for the creation and reinforcement of patriotic ideas, the re-structuring of the nation

state and the transmission of the new ideas of those in power. To clarify these relationships, I have done a comparative analysis of technical aspects and content. I compare some Italian murals, in particular those in Rome and Milan, painted by Mario Sironi, Achille Funi, Corrado Cagli, and Gino Severini, with Mexican murals painted by Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Rufino Tamayo, and José Clemente Orozco. According to Renato González Mello, the political idea of Mexican mural "con base en los valores plásticos, es la de crear un orden simbólico administrado por el Estado" (275) [31]and to highlight common symbols and repetitive codes to force the creation of a common language that serves to limit the opposition's point of view. References, languages, and common symbols include blacksmiths; hammers; anvils, a cliché used to refer to the working class; soldiers on horseback to symbolize the troops and the leader; dead bodies in the streets, to dispute the legitimacy of the State in the Mexican case and to defend and guarantee order in the Italian case; the bourgeoisie, which in both cases become welcome at the people's expense; justice, which in the Italian case is equivalent to the state; the organic union between government and people.[32] Images of strong, vigorous, aggressive and athletic bodies reflect the qualities that the state possesses, according to fascist ideology.

This same image of body-State, which was theorized by Thomas Hobbs, was later used by Lázaro Cárdenas.[33] [34]The State is perceived as a human figure formed by the collectivity of the citizens. It is a sort of perfectly logical colossal automation. Finally, in this anthropomorphic representation of society, a common logic is noticeable: the attempt to transmit universal values and to demonstrate the version of the "ideal man," according to the specific context of each regime. Both countries wish to demonstrate, within a utopian project, that all the citizens belong in society. This ideal man is a strong man of action. Among other popular themes and symbols

are the following: history (**fig.21**), the race, culture, work, the arts, language, the country, the flag, strength, liberty, the worker, the rural farm laborer, the soldier, traditions, rites, providence, and destiny.

Fig. 21   **Achille Funi-**"Minerva"

All these themes and symbols are linked to social and political ideas that represent history and a collective project for the nation. In addition, natural elements are used to stress the link between the finite and infinite, and to strengthen patriotism. These natural elements are the

following: geography; fertility of the land assumed to be a feminine space; agriculture with references to a grape vine; the thorn, representing birth; Earth; the plow; the olive; baskets of fruit; harvest, representing the maturity and growth of the country; and death as transformation. Finally, the eagle in Mexico takes flight or devours the serpent (**fig.22**) as premonition of the birth of a new nation, and in Italy, it represents the grandeur of a new empire.

Fig.22   **Diego Rivera**-"Historia de México"

They also resort to the theme of the recovery of the national past. In the Mexican case, they emphasize indigenous cultures and in the Italian case, Roman splendor. Both wish to re-create a glorious past that was lost and that the new order, its heir, will bring back to life.

Through this visual and textual analysis highlighting similarities, it is evident that both movements tried to create a new true and absolute reality, that would be above history. This shows the role of muralism as a medium through which Mexican and Italian artists contributed to the reinvention of cultural identity in periods of political uncertainty and change. Political interest in cultural reinvention can be understood in light of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's concept of invented traditions. In *The Invention of Tradition,* they explore the role of "traditions" that "appear or claim to be old [but] are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented" in shaping national identity, specifically in times of rapid social transformation" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 3). Although new customs arise from changing social and political situations, invented traditions also attempt to establish continuity with a particular element of the national historical past.

In *National Identity,* Anthony Smith describes nationalism itself as a form of invented culture in which artists have the power to shape the nation's image and identity. According to Smith, the role of artists and intellectuals is to "directly or evocatively, reconstruct the sights, sounds and images of the nation" and "through their musings and research, [give] voice to wider aspirations that they have conveyed in appropriate images, myths and symbols" (Smith 75). By appropriating traditional images and styles in the service of creating a stronger national and cultural identity, I demonstrate that the Mexican muralists of the 1920s and the Italian muralists of the 1930s, even if apparently very far politically and geographically, built, in a similar way, on the didactic and collective quality of murals, in an attempt to reinvent their nation's cultural identity through monumental public art.

3. 2. Art is still my weapon: towards the XXI Century Chicano/a Street-Urban Art.

"…pachucos, sensing the loss and hurt of their humble yet rebellious lives,
striving to impress their names and histories on crumbling tenement walls,
hoping against hope that somehow these same walls would last and become the eighth wonder
of a society falling apart at the seams all around them…"

Sanchez (48)

Fig. 23   **Anonymous Artist-**"Art is my weapon"

The production of murals in public places, as I explained in Chapter 1, has a long and composite history, not only widely spaced in geography, but also chronologically. This particular art form can be traced from the early beginnings of human settlements in Paleolithic times, appearing in nearly all historical periods up to the twenty-first century. The Chicano/a Art and Mural Movement, *El arte de la Raza*, the art of the people of Aztlán, is a part of that history. It burst onto the chaotic American social and political scenes of the 1960s, reached its apogee in the early 1970's and came whimpering asymptotically into the last part of the twentieth century,

still alive but suffering. What about the twenty-first-century socio-political and artistic production?

This chapter examines traditional and new Chicano/a street-urban expressions from a perspective of community strengths and assets. I analyze the actual Chicano/a street-urban art movement conditions, trying to find out if it is still present and, if so, how it has changed, analyzing new techniques-style-themes, and foreseeing new directions. My perspective is that unlike Chicano/a literature, the language of Chicano/a street-urban art, as any art expressions, being visual and pictorial, and not having the absolute necessity of resorting to words written in any language (English, Spanish, Spanglish, Caló,[35] Pachuco[36]), is much more widespread. Pushing the limits imposed by languages, Chicano/a street-urban art can address a broader audience, becoming a common language that is accessible to any person or passerby. They just need the simple effort of experiencing the images depicted on the walls of urban areas by looking at them. The method chosen in the past by Chicano/a street-urban artists, especially by muralists, was to suggest, by transmitting the message of action issued by their iconography, ways to transform and improve the Chicanos' living and working conditions, as well as their *barrios*.

Fig. 24   **Anonymous Artist-**"Support the barrio Art is your Power"

Using this art form, the Chicano/a Art and Mural Movement wants every neighbor to become an actor of his own more than a mere spectator (**fig.24**). Especially in the past but also in its most recent manifestation, those cultural and socio-artistic productions occur at a unique, hybrid intersection of resistance politics, visual art, and social communication between some of society's most diverse strata. In any case, in order to truly appreciate the movement's uniqueness, it is imperative to define critically the political miasma from which it came, what this ability to communicate contributed to the Chicano/a socially marginalized communities, the art world into which the Chicano/a movement was born, its rejection as an important art form by the elite American cultural and art hegemony, and finally what sets it apart from other public art of that period and today.

First, the social aspects of art, particularly street-urban art as an aesthetic field and as an instrument of political communication, have been theorized by Adorno and Horkheimer, among others)[37]. In my case, it is even more important to stress how street-urban art expressions, especially murals, became a vehicle for a social resistance movement, how colors, images and letters were used as important communication elements to unify a semiliterate population, and served as an energy engine for the Chicano/a civil rights movement, *El movimiento*. I will begin the chapter by studying Chicano/a muralism, the most famous and probably the highest street-urban artistic expressions of Chicano/a Art. I will analyze in the second part of the same chapter, new forms of street-urban Chicano/a Art. The Chicano/a Mural movement was ubiquitous in the Southwest of the United States (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California). In these areas, which were originally Mexican lands, the artistic phalanx of *El movimiento* started using Mesoamerican symbols and the value of their native culture (Olmec, Aztec, Mayan), creating

mythical common origins between those regions of the United States and Aztlán.[38] This artistic group movement drew heavily upon cohorts of marginalized society and originally attracted many members of a striving middle class Hispanic population, all of whom had long endured the taxonomy of "second class" citizens with its associated social and cultural isolation. The Chicano/a Mural movement offers an exciting opportunity to examine a body of art created for the public sphere in a different mode. It is a performative art created by a segment of society that had established a cultural base to support it and has the inherent talent to create it, and the cultural capacity to explain it. More importantly, they can communicate their message both within the community to cement cultural ties and outwardly to the general population.

Succinctly, it was intended to be didactic and inclusive, and it succeeded. At the apogee of its proliferation, there were few urban areas west of the Mississippi River, even those that only had a small population of Mexican-Americans, that did not also have a Chicano/a mural somewhere in its public space. Many of these murals were created by itinerant groups of Chicano/a artists working for local communities for little more that sustenance and supplies. These murals were created in public spaces, forming part of a minority neighborhood or *barrio*, and the political message was usually easy to understand without proposing unlawful or morally objectionable acts (**fig.25**).
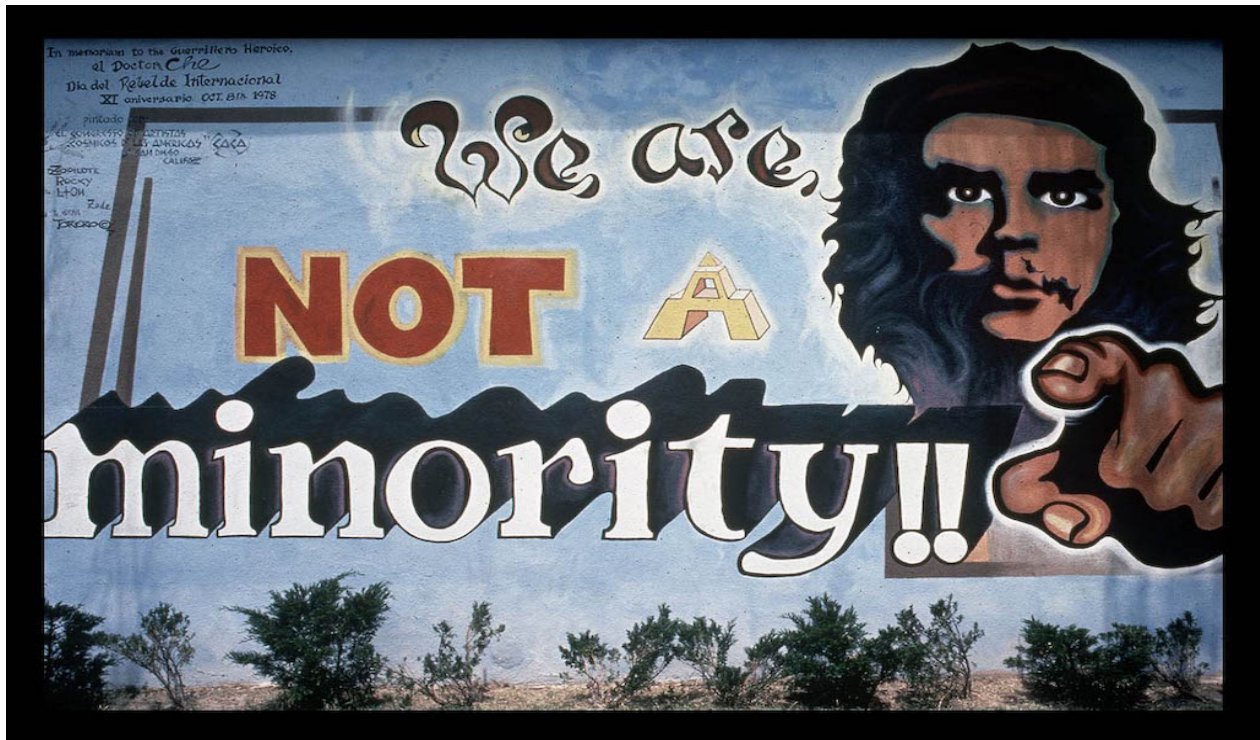
Fig.25   **Mario Torero&Rocky&El lion&Zade**-"We are not a minority"

The increased recognition of an emphasis on ethnic membership, like the Chicano/a one, created a strong revitalization of folk arts, and facilitated the emergence of new artistic expressions representing a synthesis of a specific group's cultural heritage and experiences in a country. But this has often happened with public and mural art in general. In fact, 1913, as seen in Chapter 3.1, Gerardo Murillo, an artist from Guadalajara, Mexico, is credited for painting the first modern mural in his country, during a time when Mexican President Victoriano Huerta appointed Alfredo Martínez to lead reform through public art, in order to carve out Mexico's national identity from its history. The application of this movement quickly became a voice for the dispossessed. Chicano/a murals began forming an identity in Los Angeles in the late 1960s, creating a first public consciousness through a mural expression. Earlier, Siqueiros's mural "América Tropical," painted at Olivera Street in 1932, was whitewashed for a decade. In the

farmlands of California's Central Valley, Antonio Bernal's 1968 mural on the wall of Teatro Campesino's building in Del Rey, a nod to the Mexican Mural Movement earlier in the century, is credited as the first Chicano/a mural. The Chicano/a street art movement is considered to have originated in 1967, in Venice, California, and from there, it spread quickly to the barrios of East Los Angeles. Many murals are painted in a figurative style, often drawing on *Los Tres Grandes*, the three noted Mexican muralists of the first half of the twentieth century: Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco. Usually constructed in bright colored, water-based acrylics, Chicano/a Murals were painted to decorate sidewalks, freeway bridges, park benches, fences and the walls of both public and private buildings, commercial and non-commercial areas. Prior to the emergence of this movement, the *placas*[39] (**fig.26**) -highly stylized graffiti used by urban youth gangs to mark their territory--defaced the physical appearance of *barrios*. To a number of local artists, "placas" (monikers) have actually come to represent a unique form of Chicano/a art and an integral starting point of the actual street-urban art movement.

Fig. 26   **Anonymous Artist**-"Chicano/a Placas"

However, the popularity of the Chicano/a Mural movement in Los Angeles has been viewed not so much as an extension of or a reaction to the "places," but a result of professional murals that elicited community enthusiasm and support from outsiders. The most extensive mural project at one specific location, consisting in 1975 of over 20 completed two-story high murals and additional ones in various stages of planning, exists at the Estrada Courts public housing complex in East Los Angeles (**fig.27**).

Fig. 27   **Frank Fierro**-"Orale Raza"

Throughout 1976, the proliferation of murals at Estrada Courts and elsewhere in the city continued at a rapid rate. Although the creations of East Los Angeles have received the most publicity, Chicano/a street-urban art has also appeared on a smaller scale in other communities. According to estimates made at the beginning of 1975, over one hundred Chicano/a painted murals existed throughout the country. Private businesses, interested individuals, churches and artist associations have also assisted the movement. Murals are very often painted on free spaces found in urban communities. Some are painted in "official" buildings such as schools, police stations, and other public buildings. However, most are painted on building walls that have been "claimed" by the community as their own, even though they are not owned by community residents. These spaces are transformed from their original purpose as part of a building structure to a message board for the internal and external community to see, read, and learn from. Murals are a cultural-based form of self-expression for communities that have few unregulated outlets for their public voices.

Although there is no a typical mural, I have tried to create a content analysis of traditional Chicano/a murals, discovering that, generally, murals uncover six key themes. These themes are key to communicate a central message and the importance of this art form to the community. In the last part of the chapter, I establish a comparison with twenty-first- century Chicano/a street-urban art themes. The first of the most common and represented themes has socio-political implications and represents symbols of ethnic and racial pride (**fig.28**). These symbols can be manifested in a variety of ways. Annick Treguer states that "Pre-Colombian themes, intended to remind Chicanos of their noble origins, are common. There are motifs from the Aztec codices,

gods from the Aztec pantheon, allusions to the Spanish conquest and images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a cherished Mexican icon" (23). Consequently, murals provide a "canvas" for Latinos to demonstrate knowledge of their history and pride in their cultural heritage, while concomitantly articulating their struggles against oppression.

Fig. 28   **AA.VV.-**"Quetzalcóatl"

Fig. 29   **Mario Torero&The Lomas Youth Crew-** "La Virgen de Guadalupe"

The second theme represents religious symbols (**fig.29**). The influence of the Roman Catholic religion is reflected by relevant symbols and religious themes. Religious and spiritual symbols often represent a community's hopes for the future, its history, and sometimes the value it places on the metaphysical. These symbols are very common in Chicano/a and Latino murals. Murals very often have as central element the Virgin of Guadalupe, the most important Mexican icon. To many Mexicans, she has become both a sacred religious and cultural symbol. This tradition has spread from the barrio of East Los Angeles to other areas, eliciting reverence from wide spectrum of barrio residents, ranging from older residents to street gangs. Other religious symbols are the cross and a suffering Christ. Drawing from sources both sacred and profane, mural artists creatively juxtapose an array of images and symbols in their work.

The third theme is related to social justice (**fig.30**). Murals are a natural form for expression of protest: "The concept of art as a revolutionary tool, as a weapon in a propaganda campaign against the oppressor, or as revolution itself has been carried over into the murals by Chicano/a artists in Los Angeles today" (Holscher 27) Scenes of police brutality, arson, alcohol and other drug abuse, prison, U.S. imperialism, and infant morality are almost commonplace in some Latino communities: "These neighborhood billboards are used to elicit critical examination of the root causes and solutions to the daily onslaught against inner-city youth... documenting community life and...to kindle discussion on the untimely deaths of neighborhood residents" (Cooper and Sciorra 14). In essence, mural scenes are based on historical events and are a daily reminder of the trials and tribulations of being Latino in this country and of the search for social justice.

Fig. 30   **Willie Herron&Gronk**-"Moratorium:B&W Mural"

The fourth them is based on decorative symbols created as homages to local and national heroes (**fig.31**). Consequently, murals provide local residents with opportunities to validate their experiences through their heroes. Always stressing the connection between murals and local community, one can see another social aspect of the walls used to represent memorials commissioned by local residents. Unlike murals for national and local heroes, residents may elect to commission a mural for a dead relative, close friend, or gang member. As expressed by González (1994): "The walls, sometimes playful in spirit and other times dripping with menace, are also a visual chronicle of each beleaguered neighborhood's history" (65).

Fig. 31   **Ernesto de la Loza**-"Los cuatro grandes"

Fig.32   **Sal Barajas&Francisco Contreras**-"R. *Chunky* Sanchez Mural"

This practice of honoring and remembering local heroes becomes very visual (**fig.32**). People watch while murals are painted and have a ceremony at the end. Therefore, murals, in these situations, help residents create a closer community. Chicano/a murals reflect the ethnic, religious and social background of their creators. Social class identification has also been another factor influencing the content of these murals. Even though a number of women artists did participate in the projects, their murals were clearly male-oriented. Men were depicted more frequently than women (**fig.33**), men were participating in significantly greater variety of actions, and men were the ones who were oppressing, fighting and beating, as well as working, creating and forging unity.

Fig. 33   **Tata Vazco**- "Nuestras mujeres"

Women, neither villains nor heroes, were largely depicted as more drab and passive. They participated only in a very limited range of less significant activities. Furthermore, murals also tended to portray lower class individuals, slogans and concerns, such as peasant figures, the clenched fist and farm labor problems. In this context, there seems to be a strong relationship between social class identification and preferences in artistic styles. I attribute certain preferences in style to peasant, working and lower-middle classes, which can also be discerned in the Chicano/a murals: simplicity, flatness, poster-like idiom, bright colors, boldness, grotesque distortion, and heavy, squat figures. These styles seem to fall into three main types: a stark, "reality-unmasking" kind of naturalism (which may reflect a strained relationship of the status quo); expressionistic distortion, as in the art of the Mexican revolutionary artists; and abstractionism.

Carlos, Callejo[40] one of the Chicano/a artists I interviewed, stated that his own working class background, along with a radical political orientation and concerns over select experiences, notably with discrimination against his ethnic group, have motivated him to promote mural projects. He emphasized that not only did he wish to capture what is of special relevance to barrio residents, but also that his message would have meaning to the rest of the country. With Chicano/a murals, the walls of the barrio are talking, because the artists of *El movimiento* command a universal language. The basic expressions of art are made up of symbols common to all humanity, varied only by cultural overtones. Art has always been the link between man and his environment, a source for revitalizing energies lost in the struggle for survival, a communication between people across time and space. In addition, the production of Chicano/a street murals has involved the intended audience also as participants. Therefore, both the final

product and the act of producing them performed numerous interrelated functions for barrio life, including, of course, aesthetic ones. Much of contemporary architecture and urban planning has been viewed as visually repellent and dehumanizing to its inhabitants. Even many who do not take such an extreme position have conceded that modern urban scene tends to be ugly, standardized, without character and lacking a sense of permanence. Murals can be viewed as having enhanced the appearance of low-cost structures, thereby adding, at least in a small measure, to the quality of human existence. During the interview, Callejo explained that the reason for the expansion of the Chicano/a street art movement was that it provided a meaningful way to paint the ugliness of the city: "Art is an integral part of social life and a cultural universal. In our mass society where business values, such as standardization and efficiency dominate, skilled artisans have become clearly extinct and a commitment to beauty has been diminishing, at times even resented" ("Chicano Art: Now and Beyond"). Following these ideas, it is important to underline another unique characteristic of the Chicano/a Mural movement: its promotion of street art encompassing individuals who previously had been uninvolved in artistic endeavors, including young children, the elderly, gang members, housewives, and the indigent. The experience provides these citizens with at least some measure of skill and with motivations to engage in creative enterprises. Murals enable people to learn techniques, to work under the direct supervision of specialists, and to discover their own artistic interests and potential. Furthermore, there have been also various financial, social and psychological rewards to motivate participation in these activities. Following their involvement in these projects, some *barrio* residents have started to paint murals on their own initiative, and several of the more talented youngsters were reported to have received scholarships on the basis of their contributions. The recognition by oneself and others of having achieved something worthwhile is an important component of a

positive self-concept. Being associated with the creation of street art has given numerous *barrio* residents a sense of achievement and plausibly a heightened self-respect. The product of their labor is visible; it has improved the appearance and status of the community and has possibly provided some financial gains. It can serve as a vehicle to communicate what to them is meaningful or problematic. Through murals, the Chicano/a community is perceived in a positive light, as capable of contributing to the improvement of society. Representatives of other groups have contacted Chicano/a artists for advice and/or began to imitate their work. Local news media have presented usually positive reviews, tours of the barrio have been organized, and support has come from local and federal agencies.

According to several observers of Chicano/a murals, this recognition has brought to the participants pride in themselves and their community. Even those who had not taken a direct part could still vicariously identify with the art works and feel a sense of pride in their community and ethnic group. Recently, residents of different Californian cities have made efforts to improve the appearance of their neighborhood and to prevent vandalism. Furthermore, the creation of the murals has re-enforced the religious and ethnic identity of the Chicano/a community. It has provided meaningful social unity, which I define as "from a ghettogether to a get together," [41]where neighbors can meet one another and reaffirm their ethnic identity. The emphasis on themes relevant to Mexicans and Mexican-Americans has worked as a reminder of their cultural heritage or even as an educational tool. Several Los Angeles public elementary school classes, for example, have been brought, as part of their history lessons, to view a series of murals picturing events from Mexico's loss of what is now the U.S. Southwest to present-day Mexican-American farm union activities. One of the murals in the old Maravilla housing complex in East

Los Angeles, representing the Virgin of Guadalupe, became a shrine to residents. The mural was completed in 1973 by artist David López and members of the Arizona street gang, who were also responsible for choosing this subject matter. To the neighbors, the mural became a symbol of special homage and comfort. They began to place candles and freshly cut flowers at its base; it even received a Papal blessing. When the old Maravilla housing complex was being torn down, residents' demands led the Country Housing Authority, at the very last minute, to preserve it. Though it may well be claimed that promoting the development of Chicano/a street art in the projects has had overwhelmingly positive consequences, nevertheless criticism of the program has also surfaced. Some critics have opposed the use of taxpayers' money to support the projects. One of the reasons for the opposition has been that they feel the money and effort should be invested in "more serious" projects. Another reason has been that some murals have radical themes, including the physical torture of Chicanos by the establishment. Opposition has also been expressed to public sponsorship of these forms of protest. In reference to religious murals, at least one critic has raised the question of separation of church and state. Still other objections have been based on differences in aesthetic values. In some cities city, attempts were made to stop the production of street art because it was viewed as defacing the appearance of the community. Since the life of the murals spans some two to five years, added concern has been expressed about adequately handling deteriorating murals. Therefore, some murals have brought not only recognition but also conflict.

In this second part of the chapter, I trace the current situation of Chicano/a mural art, especially in relation to the pervasive proliferation of street-urban art that is not always popular among traditionalist Chicanos artists. I also consider possible future scenarios. Before Facebook and Tweeter, protesters occupied real public spaces, using murals and walls to spread out their

messages. Advocates of traditional murals found in the *barrios* of Los Angeles argue that painted images provide a voice for the subaltern. Now the roles have been switched. Today's Mexican-American *Angelinos*, once active during the Civil Rights era and now having gained political and social influence, are letting their walls, which once represented their point of view, suffer. The art that spread the messages of neighborhood truths is now the one that has been disenfranchised, downtrodden, and suspect of being part of a larger criminal element. It is even on the cusp of being overshadowed by street art, sometimes considered to be the center of the current mural revival. Many are emerging artists who like, those raised in the neighborhoods in the last few decades, have the memory of art in their neighborhood. "I see graffiti as an extension of individual expression," states Guillermo Bejarano. "But there are older painters who look at graffiti artists who are destroying some very important Chicano/a art. We don't feel that's right. They should learn to respect art, and not destroy art." The early murals, now considered a document of history, first carried urgent messages calling for change. Today's artists are more sophisticated due to their professional training and extensive influences from other sources. As a result, the quality and variety of their artwork has improved. It is also true that just creating abstract art that is detached from the real world and struggles of the Chicano/a community is not very well accepted being considered by traditional Chicano/a artists a sort of personal self-indulgence. Carlos Callejo, for example, during the interview, argued:

> Chicano murals should not simply be a decorative and abstract art for walls with no real content. Chicano mural art also tries to avoid the use of elitist messages, vague symbols or overly subjective content. At present, the teaching of the history and culture of Chicanos/Latinos is currently decreasing in our schools with the prime example being in Arizona, where Chicano and other ethnic studies programs have been legally banned. So artists, especially muralists, presently have a very important role in using their talent as an alternative form of media in order to educate people in the community and raise questions about injustice and the reality that we live in ("Chicano Art: Now and Beyond").

Overall, the number of murals in the city is decreasing with the passage of time. There are various factors to account for this decrease and actual loss of murals. First of all, there is neither a systematic maintenance program by the city nor funds allocated for the preservation of the existing murals that have been painted over the last forty years. Many existing murals are fading or peeling, while others have been vandalized, whitewashed or consciously destroyed. Policies and regulations by the city government have sought to control the subject matter and creation of any new murals. This, in essence, is a form of censorship, as the city has a formal commission that determines which art and content is allowed to be created as a public mural. For example, if the owner of a business wants to have a mural painted on the wall of his or her place of business, he or she must secure permission from the city bureaucrats and their commission. Otherwise, the owner of the building will be fined, and eventually, the mural, even though it is on private property, will be painted over and destroyed by the city. In effect, the city government's policies and actions actually destroy art by not preserving the present murals or allowing the creation of new ones, whenever they do not meet their approval.

Therefore, the amount of murals in the city is decreasing and the level of educational subject matter contained within them is consciously being watered down. The traditional role of public art in the form of Chicano/a murals has been to raise social and political issues and to question the status quo. However, this effort is slowly being strangled by city policies and the bureaucrats of the city commission. By behaving like some sort of grand art inquisition, the city legally decides what is true or what is valid mural art, and which art is preserved or destroyed.

There is a state law called CAPA (California Arts Protection Act) that intents to protect artist's works. It is a sort of copyright law to make sure that people do not use or profit from an artist's work without his or her approval. A similar federal law called the VARA (Visual Artists Rights Act) was adopted. However, at times these laws can ironically create problems for the artistic community. For example, when a mural is tagged and vandalized by someone, then the owner of the building is responsible for the restoration. However, the owner cannot do so without the artist's permission. This situation has often created instances where some murals have been vandalized, and then left unrestored due to a lack of funds to pay the artist in order to restore the damaged mural. In other instances, some frustrated and impatient owners of buildings have eventually white-washed murals that are severely damaged by gang monikers without the permission of the artists. Some of these disputes have then resulted in lawsuits being filed by artists against the owners of the buildings for destroying their tagged murals. This, unfortunately, has created a lot of bad feelings as both sides at times feel like they are being taken advantage of.

Presently, the consequences of these restrictive city policies are that many owners of buildings no longer want any murals painted on their property due to the complicated process of having to get legal permission by the city's commission, while others are afraid of being fined by the city for having a so-called "illegal" mural on their property. Adding to this problem, many of these property owners do not want to be held financially responsible for maintaining the murals. An even worse scenario for property owners is the fear of possibly getting sued for removing a tagged-up mural without the artist's permission. This, combined with the growing number of

vandalized and tagged murals has decreased the amount of murals being preserved and created throughout the city.

Answering the question about generational conflicts that exist between younger and veteran artists in regard to subject matter, form or access to galleries and public spaces, Callejo answered:

> Well, there are many more artists today than when I began forty years ago, and of course there is much more competition for commissions and for opportunities to create public art. Unfortunately, the younger artists in general do not have as many opportunities as the older and more established artists have to show their works in public or receive commissions. Many younger artists who paint murals in public spaces that were not approved by the city often see their works quickly destroyed by city workers. Meanwhile, the older artists who get approval by the city's 'truth' commission are allowed to place their works in public and receive commissions for their works ("Chicano Art: Now and Beyond").

This obviously creates some resentment and tension, thus unintentionally promoting the illegal production of urban art. Historically, this has been the case between artists and governments. The more established and accepted artists whose subject matter is considered to be non-controversial and safe are allowed to show their works in public. Meanwhile, those who are not on the approved list are not condoned or permitted to create public art. In general, then, what we have is an older established group that is approved, promoted and paid by the city, and a younger generation whose murals are censored and quickly destroyed by the city. A historical example of this took place during the early 1930s when David Siqueiros painted his mural "América Tropical" on a wall in Olivera Street, Los Angeles. It was soon painted over due to its political subject matter, which criticized imperialism, and still to this day, it has not been totally restored. Therefore, Siqueiros, in his time, experienced this type of governmental censorship and destruction of his work. While the experience of today's younger artists is not of Siqueiros's

magnitude, it simply shows that there is a history of this type of control over artistic creativity in Los Angeles that continues to this day. On the positive side, there have been many new Chicano/a art galleries as well as others that have opened up around the city. These galleries are small, but they allow many younger artists to show their works and receive exposure for their creative talent. This is a positive trend, as it does not tie young artists to the whims of the older and more conservative galleries that are primarily profit-driven businesses and do not always exhibit subject matter that contains controversial social issues. In conclusion, the Chicano/a muralist movement will continue as a traditional genre even with the city's restrictions imposed on it and with the change in social conditions. Eventually, I would like to see all politically conscious artists work in unity and learn from one another through the development of a mutual support system that will allow them to flourish. There will always be an ever-changing reality that provides fresh subject matter for muralists to depict. These will be murals that hopefully can be widely viewed in order to educate and motivate the community. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, many Americans noticed a Latino presence in their communities and workplaces. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that nearly 45.5 million Latinos lived in the United States in 2010. Demographers project that Latinos will shed the "minority" label in more areas of the United States as the century progresses. This change in racial and ethnic complexion is dramatically reshaping the face of U.S. society. Yet, most non-Latino Americans know little about Mexican Americans and their rich history or their numerous contributions to American popular culture, literature, music, theater, and visual arts. Scholars have shed some light on the history of the Chicano/a experience from the Spanish Conquest of the sixteenth century to the U.S. Chicano *movimiento* of the 1960s and, to the present. Despite their increasing presence, however, Mexican American artists are largely ignored in mainstream museums and are absent

in history texts on American art. Contemporary Mexican American or Chicano/a art has developed as a social phenomenon from its inception in the 1960s to its present form. Chicano/a art has undergone remarkable transformations, shifting from a strict Chicano/a perspective to a more universal expression. Moreover, Chicano/a art is a creative expression unique to the United States, and it remains a people's art-by, for, and about Americans. Regardless of aesthetic changes and cultural labels, Chicano/a artists continue to dedicate their art to their respective communities as well as to the broader North American society where it was created. Throughout its unfolding, Chicano/a art has served as an art of identity, asserting the uniqueness of Chicanos and their dual cultural backgrounds, from both Mexico and the United States. Many have perceived Chicano/a art merely as protest art or social commentary; certainly, identity politics were and still are a prevailing force in Chicano/a expression (**fig.34**). However, more than ever before, Chicano/a art is diverse in medium, style, technique, and content (**fig.35-36-37**).

Fig. 34   **Retna&El Mac-**Untitled

Aesthetically, Chicano/a art brings fresh approaches that help redefine and advance the American experience through new ideas of who Americans are and what American art is. The inevitable crossover of Chicano/a culture into American popular culture makes the need more pressing to further investigate and document Chicano/a creative expression. With visual literacy of the Chicano/a experience, one sees how these vibrant threads are interwoven into the rich tapestry of the larger American experience. By examining Chicano/a visual art one gains insight into physical and psychological forces at play in the evolution of Chicano/a consciousness and creativity.

Fig. 35 Anonymous Artist-"Free Aztlan Stencil" **Fig.36 Anonymous Artist- "**Chavez Sticker"

Fig. 37   **Anonymous Artist-**"Aztlan"

By examining Chicano/a visual art one sees how these vibrant threads are interwoven, and gains insight into physical and psychological forces at play in the evolution of Chicano consciousness and creativity. Better understanding of Chicanos through their art leads to greater appreciation of the unique contributions Chicanos have made to America's economic prosperity and cultural development. Chicano/a art stretched beyond its borders in the 1990s to reach American and international audiences through postmodernism and a broader worldview. A new historicity arising in Chicano/a art history in the 1990s offered models to identify, analyze,

collect, and exhibit Chicano/a artwork past and present. Many Chicano/a artists have successfully crossed over into the mainstream. A clear example of this is the 2012 exhibition *Mapping Another L.A. The Chicano Art Movement,*[42] which explores the diverse artistic contributions of artists of Mexican-descent since 1945 and provides the basis for a visual dialogue about Los Angeles and contemporary art through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. These artists have not ignored their identity or cut ties to their respective communities. Artists such as Sinner, Nuke, and Chose also began to almost re-use and reinterpret the imagery of the Chicano/a mural art movement of the past. This is apparent in political commentaries (**fig.38-39**), stencil of Frida Khalo (**fig.40**), wheatpaste images of Zapata (**fig.41**), portraits of *Cholas* (**fig.42**).

Fig. 38   **Anonymous Artist**-"Calle y Libertad"

Fig. 39   **Anonymous Artist**-"Tierra y Libertad"

Fig. 40   **Anonymous Artist**-"Femstache Represent"

Fig. 41   **Anonymous Artist -**"ZapataWheatpaste"

Fig. 42   **Anonymous Artist-**"Old Chola"

The popularity of Magazines such as *Juxtapoz* began to give validity and a voice to more emerging urban artists, also known as lowbrow artists. Working more on canvases than on walls, artists like Germ Sacarias and Mario Ybarra Jr. are finding new doors that Chicano/a artists can cross. They apply artistic liberty and incorporate innovative techniques that push the boundaries of what Chicano/a art is.

Today, street-urban Chicano/a art is finding its way past the galleries and into the tattoo world, fashion industry, photography, and fashion industry. My hope is that the term street-urban Chicano/a can unite and inspire the new generation of Chicanos who are being born on the streets, especially in L.A. but in general all over the U.S. It is important to understand and remember the pioneers of Chicano/a Art (the Chicano muralists) and who are the shakers and movers of today (Chose, Spade, the Oriel's) and who will open the paths for the future.

In light of my research, made up of interviews, historical and bibliographic documentation (pictures and videos), there are several differences between the Chicano/a mural movement and the new wave of street-urban Chicano/a art.

First of all the historical period has changed and, with it, the total marginalization, even if too often still present, of the Chicano/a community; this socio-cultural evolution brought, as first change, theme differences in the murals productions that are now less related to racial and ethnic identitarian issues favoring an increasing cultural hybridization (the statue of liberty mixed with la Virgen de Guadalupe is a clear example of it-**fig.43**).

Secondly, thanks to new forms of artistic expression - more related to the street-urban art culture, the concept of the paternity of the art works has also changed.

Fig. 43   **Anonymous Artist**-"N.Y.D.F."

Today, it is no longer necessary to find large spaces to create collective and participatory murals; the speed of artistic actions and especially the reproducibility of the art-works, thanks to new post-graffiti techniques (stencil graffiti, sticker art, street wheatpasting and poster art, video projection, art intervention, guerrilla art, installations) allow the juxtaposition of themes, styles, colors and lines seen as part of a natural growth process of the message itself. The irony, first forbidden by the seriousness of the political message becomes perhaps the key to write and interpret the new street-urban Chicano/a works of art (for example, the Stars Wars Emiliano Zapata-**fig.44**). Today, the social value of the artwork is not totally denied but it has certainly been redesigned and revised.

Fig. 44   **Anonymous Artist**-"Stars Wars Emiliano Zapata"

Still present are some of the traditional macro issues related, for example, to the migration process-**fig.45**, or to the solidarity with other minorities-**fig.46**; social and political education ideas become part of a new glocal world that includes new struggles (**fig.47**-the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, represented by Subcomandante Marcos -the main ideologist, spokesperson of EZLN, and the Occupy Movement-**fig.48**).

Fig. 45   **Anonymous Artist** -"La Migra Destruye Familias"

Fig. 46　　　　　**Anonymous Artist**- **"**No human being is illegal y cada uno tiene su sueño"

Fig. 47 Anonymous Artist- "SubMarcos"

Fig. 48 Anonymous Artist-"Occupy Oakland"

In conclusion, it is critical to view twenty-first-century Chicano Street-urban art from a new perspective to better understand community strengths and the issues and struggles of its residents. We must systematically consider the role Chicano Street-Urban art can play in bringing a community together, by drawing unique sorts of public places in the community that are the environments where people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and enhance critical capacities. I have the distinct feeling that the Chicano movement has exceeded the threshold of the twentieth century with the need, in order not to disappear, to change its skin. To achieve this, it will continue to use, even if it is in a different way, the walls of the city, which have always been considered the privileged space to express their ideas.

3.3 New Street-Urban Art

"I've always paid a great deal of attention to what happens on walls.
When I was young, I often even copied graffiti"

Brassaï (92).
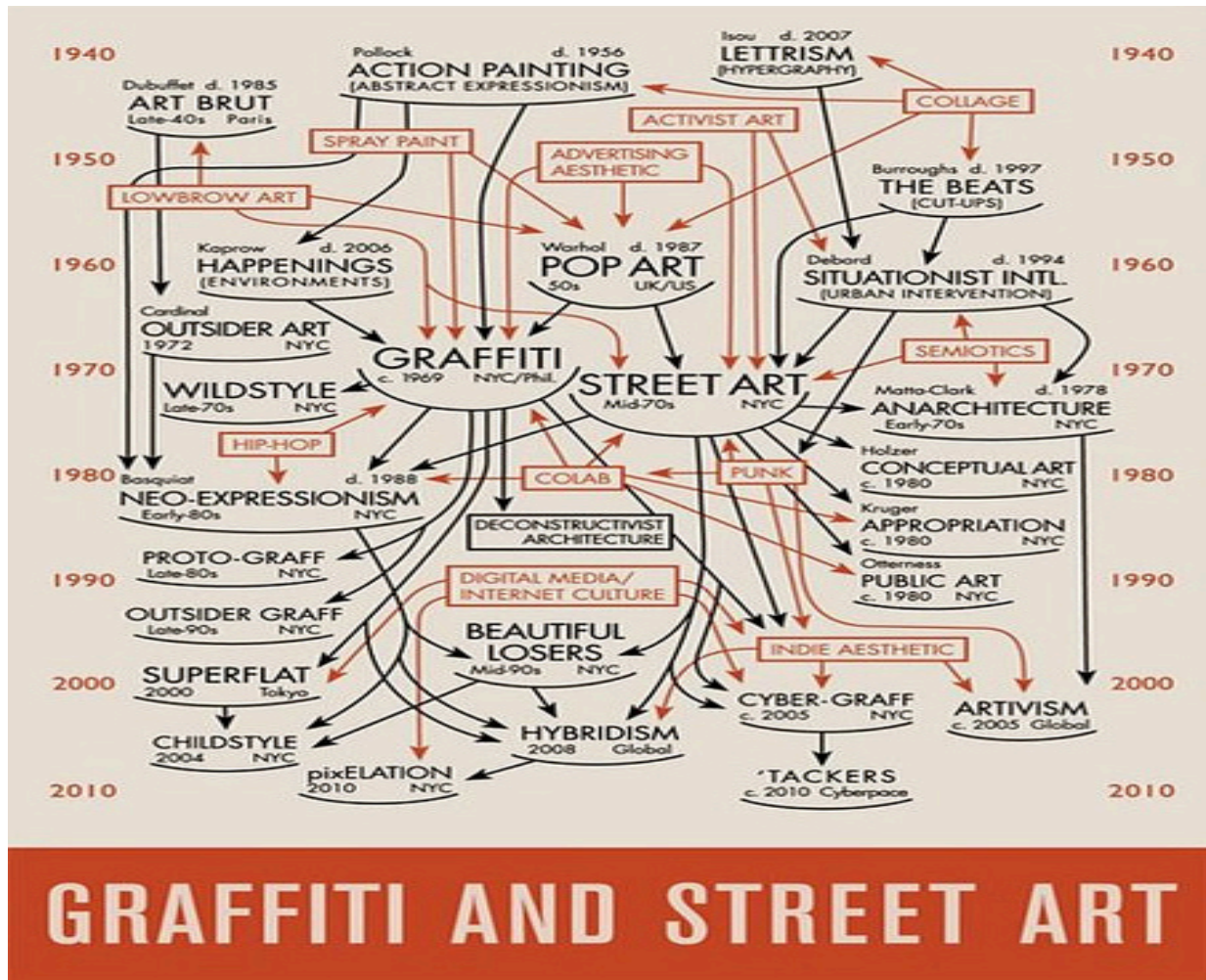
Fig. 49   **Daniel Feral-"**Graffiti&Street Art FamilyTree"

As expressed by Irvine, in his historical analysis of street-urban art: "In the past fifteen years, many street artists have gone from underground, usually anonymous, hit and run, provocateurs pushing the boundaries of vandalism and toleration of private property trespass, to

highly recognized art stars invited to create legal, commissioned wall murals and museum installations" (235) The genealogy of street art is now well-documented. Every art movement has its own myths of origin and foundational moments. Yet what provides continuity from the early graffiti movements of the 1970s and 1980s to the diverse group of cross-over artists and urban interventionists recognized in the 1990s (Blek le Rat, Barry McGee, Shepard Fairey, Ron English, Banksy, WK Interact, José Parlá, Swoon) and the new cohort of artists recognized since 2000 (for example, Os Gêmeos, Judith Supine, Blu, Vhils, JR, Gaia) is the audacity of the *act* itself. Musealization of street art, commercialization of artists' craft, and deployment of street art aesthetics on behalf of companies are sustained by the increasing notoriety achieved through artists' self-focused use of public space: the aforementioned self-celebration by means of personal logos, tags, and writings, which make public space a personal window. Artists in this category promote street democracy, the collective stance, and encourage a twofold contestation. On the one hand, they resist individualistic deployment of public space by both other artists and passersby. Consequently, they oppose the capitalistic sale of streets resulting in the commercialization of street art, the egocentric display of the self carried out by artists performing on their own behalf, the overwhelming domination of advertising, and the emphasis on private property marked by the individualistic dwellers and gatekeepers.

This part of my study focuses on some of the most important street artists (Banksy, Os Gêmeos, BLU, and JR), and, in particular, on the underground nature of their artworks. The final goal of this analysis is to show how urban interventions constitute practices of institutional critique that help create and support a collective critical capacity against dominant cultural forces, such as the sanctity of the museum and an unquestioning acceptance of capitalistic

marketing strategies. Through strategically selected public sites and architectural façades, in addition to the unsanctioned use of museum space, these artists illegally utilize public spaces as their own forums of expression. Why this rebellion? What does creating art that transgresses the law *mean*? These will be important questions that I hope to answer in the following pages. I will discuss these practices as examples of art focused on institutional criticism in relation to the writings of Michel Foucault, Mike Davis, Sarah Stephens,[43] and Jeff Ferrell to show how the modern city aims to aggressively eradicate formerly public space, and how such policies are instigated and institutionalized by hegemonic "aesthetics of authority." Therefore, I will show how street art critiques the construct and mentality of the modern city by encouraging the public to realize the hierarchies and power structures that create society's norms. The global community of artists is now a network of non-linear relationships that grow and cluster nodally by city identity, techniques, and philosophy of art practice. Contemporary street art is a broad field that, because of its myriad forms, resists a singular definition. Indeed, this seems to be a trend with no signs of slowing down, as the magazine ARTnews has recently named street art one of the top ten trends in contemporary art. Therefore, a "legitimate" art magazine legitimates street art and makes it a trend for high stakes collectors. But how does this keep it countercultural, subversive, and counter-hegemonic? Or, has street art itself been co-opted by the very forces it once denounced?

One of street art's most important functions is its critique of the construct and mentality of the modern city. This trend is best explicated by Mike Davis when he describes the construct of contemporary Los Angeles as indicative of a greater movement within urban planning: i.e., how the defense of luxury has given rise to city planning that enforces restrictive social

boundaries, consequentially destroying democratic public space. As Davis details, urban form and architecture in the contemporary city has followed a repressive function, serving to protect enclaves of the wealthy within gated communities against the "mean streets," populated by the underprivileged occupants of impoverished neighborhoods. The new city is constructed to eradicate the democratic mixing of classes in order to foster "middle-class work, consumption, and recreation, insulated from the city's 'unsavory' streets. Ramparts and battlements, reflective glass and elevated pedways, are tropes in an architectural language warning off the underclass Other" (Davis 314). By illegally "defacing" city walls, landmarks, billboards, and other city areas, street artists attempt to reclaim the ideal of a public, democratic space open to all classes of society. As Jeff Ferrell succinctly states, graffiti writing breaks the hegemonic hold of corporate/governmental style over the urban environment and the situations of daily life (Ferrel 176). As a form of aesthetic sabotage, it interrupts the pleasant, efficient uniformity of "planned" urban space and predictable urban living. For the writers, graffiti disrupts the lived experience of mass culture, the passivity of mediated consumption. Like cultural theorist Dick Hebdige, Ferrell similarly posits style as a subcultural weapon used by graffiti artists to confront hegemony. In *Crimes of Style*, Ferrell asserts that the illegal practice of graffiti art challenges the "aesthetics of authority (111). This term can be loosely defined as the visuality of hegemony, or the manner in which those in power force the rest of the population to see or understand something. For example, clean buildings, and the appreciation of them, are as much a part of authority and control as police patrols and prisons; and the markings of graffiti writers are as much a threat to this as are protest marches and rent strikes. Graffiti writing and street art in general, therefore, stylistically challenge the values posited by hegemonic power structures: the idea is that graffiti is bad and clean walls are good. Ferrell exposes the fact that public perception is molded by the

dictates of those in power. In other words, "assertions as to graffiti's ugliness vis-à-vis well groomed communities, fears that graffiti somehow breeds lawlessness and decay" (115) are actually the fears and perceptions of those holding political or social power, not necessarily those of the general public. But if the public is "forced" to understand that clean walls are good or beautiful and graffiti is bad or ugly, why does the general public not also hold the same "fears and perceptions" of those in power? Aren't the aesthetics of authority pervasive? Instead of labeling street-urban art as vandalism, I prefer to refer to those actions as an "urban renewal" campaign to which authority figures would most definitely object. Rather than being seen as an outlet for self-indulgent self-expression, street-urban art is now being seen by many as a medium for raising awareness and communicating a message. The street-urban artist becomes an *artivist*. In my perception *artivism* it is a combination between art and activism. The *artivist* uses artistic talents to fight and struggle against injustice and oppression-by any medium necessary. The *artivist* knows that to make an observation is to have an obligation.

Fig. 50   **Anonymous Artist**-"Silent no more"

3.4. Banksy

"I'm writing my thesis on graffiti and wondered if you could answer the following question?
Do you think graffiti is a form of urban expression born
out of the socio-economic policies of the latter
20th Century in the neo-classical style of
a post Modern Thatcherist era?
Err, no "
Banksy (2009).

Banksy is a renowned culture jammer. He is an artist who, although he is known for art that is shown in art galleries, is most popular for his graffiti. Banksy's culture jamming designs have a strong commentary and political influence behind them. His identity remains anonymous because of the illegality of some of his work. Through his artworks, the British artist has become, without any doubts, the biggest street-urban art paradigm case. He is able to jump from merry prankster, vandal, and nuisance to an art world showman and post-Warholian career manager with works now protected on the streets and studio objects in high demand by collectors, auction houses, and museum curators. At the same time, he is still refusing to lend his works and/or time to corporate agencies for profit, as he views this as "selling out," or contradictory to the message of his artwork. While he originally dealt with the classic graffiti style, Banksy turned to stencils that allow him to best express his mocking and humorous commentary into a powerful means of communication. The work of Banksy incorporates satire and subversive witticisms to communicate a cheeky dark humor that is executed through a stenciling technique. Such works of political and social commentary have appeared on signs, walls, streets, and bridges around the world and Banksy has even gone as far as to build physical props (Baker).

Banksy's art features images of various types of animals such as rats and apes, policemen, children, soldiers, the elderly, and a range of pop-culture icons. His stencils are both humorous and salient (**fig.51**). They are often combined with slogans to convey a message that is generally anti-war, anti-establishment or anti-capitalist in nature.

Fig. 51   **Banksy**-"Follow your dreams (Cancelled)"

The artist has stated that through his work, he wants to show that money has not crushed the humanity out of everything. Banksy has gained an international reputation by pushing the limits through his countless pieces of street art as well as highly illegal pranks, such as works on the Israeli separation wall (**fig.52**) that echo the political situation surrounding the area.

Fig. 52   **Banksy**-"Girl and Soldier"

Another stunt through which he gained significant press coverage was the mounting of a stuffed rat with wrap-around sunglasses on a wall in the Natural History Museum in London. Other stunts have included doctoring copies of Paris Hilton's debut album in numerous record stores across the UK, and [even] placing a life-size replica of a Guantanamo Bay detainee in Disneyland. More recently, he managed to "carry his own humorous artworks into four New York institutions-the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum and the American Museum of Natural History. He attached them with adhesive to the walls, alongside other paintings and exhibits" (Kennedy) It is undeniable that his "sense of placement" is always both "highly considered and highly effective, and while many street artists present their messages in a take it or leave it' fashion without any discourse for their work, Banksy offers some form of critical opinion time and time again" (Lewisohn 117).

Banksy is now a cult hero around the world, known for his provocative, amusing, and politically charged stencil graffiti, as well as his highly publicized museum "interventions." Often labeled in newspapers as a "guerrilla artist," or even as an "art terrorist," his artwork has gained fanatical popularity not only for its ingenuity and wittiness, but also because of its illegal nature. While Banksy has held several gallery shows, overall he seems to prefer city streets, buildings, cars, national monuments, uninvited museum spaces, zoos, and to display his work. I would like to center my discussion on his street activity because of their relation to the city and its citizens. Banksy's illegal street art calls to attention the hypocrisy of political and corporate ownership of and authority over "public" space. Often using rats, timeless symbols of societal outcasts, Banksy's stencils and museum interventions encourage anarchy: they incite the "powerless" (assumedly the poor, minorities, members of subcultures, and revolutionaries) to question existing structures of authority and hegemony (dominant political parties and corporations) and fight for a redistribution of power (**fig.53**).

Fig. 53   **Banksy**-"R.McDonald&Mickey Mouse"

In his book *Existencilism*, Bansky states: "I have a fantasy that all the little powerless losers will gang up together. That all the vermin will get some good equipment and then the underground will go overground and tear this city apart" (Bansky). Thus his pieces portraying rats in such a manner stand as a societal critique and call for a reversal of power. In addition to his rats, Banksy likewise utilizes irony and humor in other iconographic images to confront societal power structures. His works range from military helicopters, wrapped in a pink bow, wishing viewers to "have a nice day," to chimpanzees with signs tied around their necks stating, "Laugh now, but one day we'll be in charge" (Banksy); from smiling children gleefully embracing nuclear weapons to surveillance cameras. Another branch of his stencil graffiti that exemplifies this anarchical, defiant quality is his work depicting British police officers. By portraying law officers in compromising situations, Banksy endeavors to undermine their roles as figurative symbols of official or "legitimate" authority or enforcers of that authority. In a stencil from 2002, Banksy executed the life-size, tri-colored image of a palace guard urinating on the wall of a building, his machine gun resting at his side. Not only did he chose to portray a symbol of hegemonic power and authority in an embarrassing situation, but he also chose to highlight illegality (public urination or public indecency), thereby effectively stripping the guard of his power through the use of irony. In his anarchical rejection of social power structures, we can see a reaction to the hegemonic structures of authority. This artistic reaction to social control links his artworks to Foucault's ideas. Foucault detailed how the structuring of discursive spaces of specialized institutions, such as military camps and monasteries, has infiltrated not only the structure of prisons, but the rest of society as well. Bansky maintains his anonymity because of the illegality of his art and his desire to avoid incarceration. The British artist alters a vertical guided social way of life, promoting instead an artistic reaction to the established power. In one

of his few declarations, he complains: "If you want to say something and have people listen then you have to wear a mask" (Bansky) This comment is reminiscent of Subcomandante Marcos's ideas of public face and of unknown icon. By addressing his anonymous persona, Banksy directly critiques the cult of genius that has dominated the art world since the Renaissance. Yet these statements are contradictory: while denying the importance of the creator, he likewise expresses a desire to disseminate his personal opinions and ideas not only in this quotation, but also in the fact that he "signs" many of his works.

Fig. 54   **Banksy**-"Banksy's real name is   "

By invading the public domain and the museum system with his graffiti art and installation pieces, Banksy is, indeed, making his voice known and becoming a celebrity in the process. Therefore, while he may not have begun creating illegal art as a ploy to become famous, attaining an international reputation has certainly been one of the results. I believe that Banksy views graffiti as a way of linking criminality to beautification and the enhancement of the urban environment. The British artist sees street art in general as a means of expression for those who are the victims of poverty and oppression. Banksy offers a romantic, mockingly wistful vision of the possibilities of street art on his website: "Imagine a city where graffiti wasn't illegal, a city where everybody could draw wherever they liked. Where every street was awash with a million colors and little phrases. Where standing at a bus stop was never boring. A city that felt like a living breathing thing which belonged to everybody, not just the estate agents and barons of big business. Imagine a city like that and stop leaning against the wall -it's wet" (Bansky).

Banksy also interprets graffiti art as a direct assault on corporate advertising tactics (see for example **fig.53** in which is critically re-interpreting famous Walt Disney and McDonald's icons). He turns vandalism laws upside down with his own theory of "Brandalism," a concept that identifies "The Advertisers" as the real villains and criminals. Following this construction, public advertising is a more vindictive, manipulative form of vandalism, as it invades public space and infiltrates public opinion without the permission of the general public. Indeed, he and Blu, Os Gêmeos, Jr, among others, are in agreement as to the unjust distribution of public space. For example, corporations are allowed by law to advertise on buses, billboards, benches, etc., because they have the money to pay for such an intrusion. Thanks to trademarks, intellectual property rights and copyright laws, advertisers can say what they like and wherever they like,

with total impunity. Bansky effectively negates their authority and legality. It is apparent that he attempts to justify his illegal graffiti art by villainizing hegemonic cultural signifiers, such as those used by corporate advertisers, and the manner in which they wield their influence. In his book *Wall and Piece,* he comments on the public's perception of graffiti artists as villainous criminals: "Crime against property is not real crime. Graffiti writers are not real villains. I'm always reminded of this by real villains who consider the idea of breaking into someplace, not stealing anything, and then leaving behind a painting of your name in four foot high letters the most retarded thing they ever heard of" (Bansky 140 : 2005).

Thus Banksy is denying the malicious, destructive intent that hegemonic authority posits as the motivating factors fueling the production of graffiti, while simultaneously, and perhaps more subtly, pointing out how figures of authority have the power to shape public perception. "When Banksy negates the veracity of crime against property as a real crime, and downplays the image of graffiti writers/artists as true villains, he is negating the ideological constructs established by hegemonic authority" (Stephens 45). "Thus Banksy uses illegality in his street art and museum interventions as a counter-cultural intervention that works against the hegemonic control of the ideology of criminality, and the utilization of public space. After all, the city is more vivid when you speak to it" (Stephens 45).

3.5. Os Gêmeos

"Enfeitar a cidade, transformar o urbano com uma arte viva,
popular, da qual as pessoas participem,
é a minha intenção."

Spinelli (13)

Os Gêmeos (Portuguese for "the Twins") is a Brazilian duo consisting of identical twin brothers Otavio and Gustavo Pandolfo, born in São Paulo in 1974. Os Gêmeos are part of a tradition of public art in Latin America that goes back to the Mexican muralist movement of the 1920s and the Brazilian painters Di Cavalcanti and Candido Portinari, who produced works in the early and mid-20th century (Stewart). The Pandolfos turned to street-urban art to express themselves and to communicate with other dwellers of São Paulo, a vast urban metropolis of twenty million people. But diving into their work also allowed them to retreat from the intense realities of a city with great disparities between rich and poor, scarce greenery and an always present threat of violence (**fig.56**). Originally, the Pandolfo brothers were break-dancers who were greatly influenced by the New York City hip hop culture of the 1970s (which hit Brazil in the mid-1980s). Although they had been using latex and rollers to tag their names, by 1988 they had made the leap into street art. In general, street-urban art in Brazil serves as "a symbolic act of protest and defiance against fallen regimes," but also as a symbol of "regenerated values of democracy" (Chaffee 10) Work produced as part of this catharsis commemorates political transformation and creates an historical record of the events, happenings, emotions, and thinking" (Chaffee 10).

Fig. 55   **Os Gêmeos**-"Ordem e Progresso?"

Brazil's recent economic boom is worsening certain social ills and inequalities already present in its society. Like the early days of New York graffiti, the Brazilian graffiti scene exposes a "strong opposition towards the rich upper classes from people living in the ghettos" (Ganz and Manco 125) Street art in Brazil reflects social and economic problems as well as the drug and gang conflicts.

Brazilian graffiti is unique for many reasons. Due to various political and economic factors, the art form "developed in relative isolation" which "led to a style and approach that is extremely original" (Lewisohn 52). The perception of street art is different in Latin America, and while most often it is illegal, it is viewed as "the people's art," and the public is proud of the colorful works that decorate the walls of their streets" (Lewisohn 89). The art form in Brazil has introduced a completely new form of the bubble letter, a type of graffiti letters, usually considered to be an older (and sometimes outmoded) style, that, as a sign of respect, is never painted over. Brazil is most famed, however, for its *pixação* (or *pichação*) a "cryptic and elongated writing style" that originated in São Paulo during the 1980s (18-19).

Pixação (**fig.56**), from the Portuguese verb "pichar," or to cover with tar, "reflects the urban decay and deep class divisions that still define much of the bigger Brazilian city" (Romero). The writers of this script, known as *pixadores*, risk their life to reach the tops of the tallest buildings, and leave no surface uncovered.

Fig. 56   **Anonymous Artist**-"Pixação"

Os Gêmeos were initially fascinated by the power of these Brazilian graffiti. Yet the Pandolfo twins, since they were four years old, developed their own visual language together in shared sketchbooks, creating and capturing a brightly colored world shared in their dreams that they call "Tritrez." "At 16 we turned to graffiti," Os Gêmeos say, "to escape the chaos of life in São Paulo. The city is a beast that is growing out of control" (Alastair). Furthermore they started creating giant figures several stories tall, drawing life-sized characters engaged in everyday activities such as hugging each other or writing graffitis, and spinning detailed narratives populated with their characters inside sprawling muralscapes. Now jumping from underground to mainstream, they create everything from paintings to sound-system installations to giant interactive sculptures. Together, they have helped define the visual landscape of São Paolo and their unique visual language has become internationally synonymous with Brazilian street art. Their work tends to be both colorful and fantastical, and is inhabited by thick yellow people with matchstick-thin limbs and angular, expressive eyes that are set widely apart. Each piece they do holds some sort of commentary on love, hope, poverty, or political dissent. However, their works simultaneously evoke the world of their dreams and the *favelas* (shanty towns) where they were raised.

In this sense, both *pixação* and Os Gêmeos draw upon the same political and social discontent felt by much of the population in São Paolo. However, Os Gêmeos also strive to represent their culture, the beauty of Brazil, and the positive aspects of Brazilian family life. Through their vibrant images, they hope to enhance and add color to everyday life (**fig.57**). This makes their world and the characters who inhabit it just as complex and exciting to follow as those found in any well written story. Familial love, national pride, and the desire to precipitate

change are represented with equal prominence in their works as political unrest and extreme poverty. The twins populate their murals with distinctive and melancholic human figures, whose yellow skin and strange proportions lend them an alien aspect. A similar other-worldly feeling infuses their gallery paintings, sculptures and installations. The overall effect of their art is one of magical realism that according to them "is always couched in the everyday" ("When the Streets Become Canvases's"). But their art also reflects the spirit, and sometimes the politics of the world in which they live.

Fig. 57   **Os Gêmeos**-"Cavaleiro Marginal"

Their method of painting is just as unique as the world they have created. They are adamant about painting only during the day in extremely public areas. When they paint a mural,

the Pandolfo twins plan the visual story before they start drawing on the wall. Each twin starts at one end and they continue to paint until they meet in the middle. It is a very intuitive process between the brothers, because no talking is involved. Scenes from everyday life in São Paulo's poor neighborhoods are common, as are references to Brazilian folklore. "We are always looking for our roots," avers Gustavo Pandolfo; "They are a constant inspiration."(Alastair). Political slogans also appear sometimes in the brothers' art. "We are also about giving people a voice" (Alastair), states Gustavo. São Paulo has grown visibly richer over the past decade, but Os Gêmeos do not see the lot of the city's poorest residents improving economically. "There is a lot that needs to change here," complains Gustavo. "Brazilians need to be more radical. They have their rice and beans and think everything is OK" (Alastair).Their murals seek to address these social concerns. Characters in them often appear alienated or disenfranchised. The Pandolfos themselves, meanwhile, have transcended their humble working-class roots. Indeed, the hard-working brothers arguably have a higher profile abroad than they do in their home country. Although Os Gêmeos continue to paint in São Paolo to this day (both sanctioned and unsanctioned works), they are very popular in the United States, Cuba, and Europe. Over the past few years, they have painted in Portugal, Germany, the Netherlands, Lithuania, and the UK.

In 2008, Os Gêmeos were invited to create a mural for Tate Modern Gallery in London, as part of a larger exhibition of street art on the façade of their building. Hailed as the first major display of street art at a public museum in London, it led to a significant re-evaluation of their work by their native city of São Paolo. Deitch (the Miami Art Fair) and the Tate Modern are some of the many renowned institutions that have legitimized not only the work of Os Gêmeos, but those of other street artists as well. This appreciation has started to affect the way street art is

viewed by not only the general populace, but also the government. Although there is still a firm divide between those who whole-heartedly support street art and those who lump it in with mindless tagging, there is a raised awareness. In São Paulo, this newfound recognition of Os Gêmeos' work abroad stimulated a public discussion of what constituted art. Similarly, the creation of a registry of sanctioned street art in São Paulo was established by the city for preservation. São Paulo is a city that has a rich history of activism and a government that has vacillated between restricting and listening to the people. The Clean City Law, which outlaws advertisements, highlighting São Paulo's historic beauty, is one example. Another is a more lenient attitude toward Street Art as a result of the effort of Os Gêmeos, who convinced the Minister of Culture that graffiti murals are important cultural landmarks that are appreciated with the population. Os Gêmeos work to provide art that challenges their viewers' thinking without giving a clear-cut meaning to their art: "To improvise is the best way to make art. South America thrives on improvisation. Brazil is a country of great miscegenation of peoples, races, beliefs, folklores, popular cultures, foods, et cetera. It's as if there were many worlds within a larger world called Brazil ("Os Gemeos" qtd in Muniz par 3Os)". These "many worlds" that exist in countries also exist in Os Gêmeos' murals. They do not explain any art piece, their inspiration for it, or the message they hope viewers will receive. Instead, they let people imagine things. Os Gêmeos' murals often seek to address these social concerns, but creating characters that appear alienated or disenfranchised (Alastair). "A common motif depicts several graffiti taggers garbed in brightly patterned clothes stacked atop one another to reach an impossibly high spot. In addition to contemporary urban themes, rural Brazil has an equally significant presence in their work. Festivals, music, and folk art fascinate the twins and inspire fantastical paintings of musicians, processions and festivals—all of which are based on their own photographs" ("First

Solo U.S. Museum Exhibition of Brazilian Artists O Gêmeos" part 3). In conclusion, to stress the similar vocation of the artists, it is important to note that Os Gêmeos and Banksy recently collaborated in a project in New York. For the work, inspired by the Occupy movement, Banksy and Os Gêmeos have aligned their signature styles side-by-side. In one mural, Banksy's armored men surround Os Gêmeos' protestors, and in the other the British artist's policeman stands in a crowd of the Brazilian twins' characters.

Fig. 58   **Os Gêmeos+Banksy**-"Better Out than In"

3.7. Blu

Blu is a Bologna, Italy, based talent that has been the talk of the whole street art universe, which includes blogs, magazines, and websites where his work is as renowned as Banksy, Invader, Shepard Fairey, Swoon, and others. Blu is the pseudonym of an Italian artist who conceals his real identity.[1] He has been active in street art since 1999. After 2000, he became increasingly popular in the underground scene thanks to a series of illicit graffiti painted in the historical center and suburbs of Bologna, the capital of Italy's Emilia-Romagna region. In the early years of his career, his technique was limited to the use of spray paint, the typical medium of graffiti culture. In one of his few interviews, released to an Iranian Underground Arts Media, Blu clarified his background and his political approach to street-urban art:

> I started with graffiti ten years ago. What you can see in the street are mostly graffiti pieces and tags, graffiti are almost everywhere in Italy, you can find it even in small towns. In the bigger cities, there are also other kind of street art and people experimenting different languages and using different medias. On one side, there is a good quality and many original ideas, on the other side, "street art" is a fashion product, so most of the people are just doing it because it is 'cool;' I hope this 'street art' game will end soon" ("K.S Interview with Blu").

His characteristic style appeared in 2001, when Blu started painting with house paint, using rollers mounted on top of telescopic sticks. This new solution allowed him to increase the painted surface area, especially in public spaces, and to convey a stronger intensity to his visual vocabulary, populated by sometimes sarcastic or dramatic huge human figures (**fig.59**).
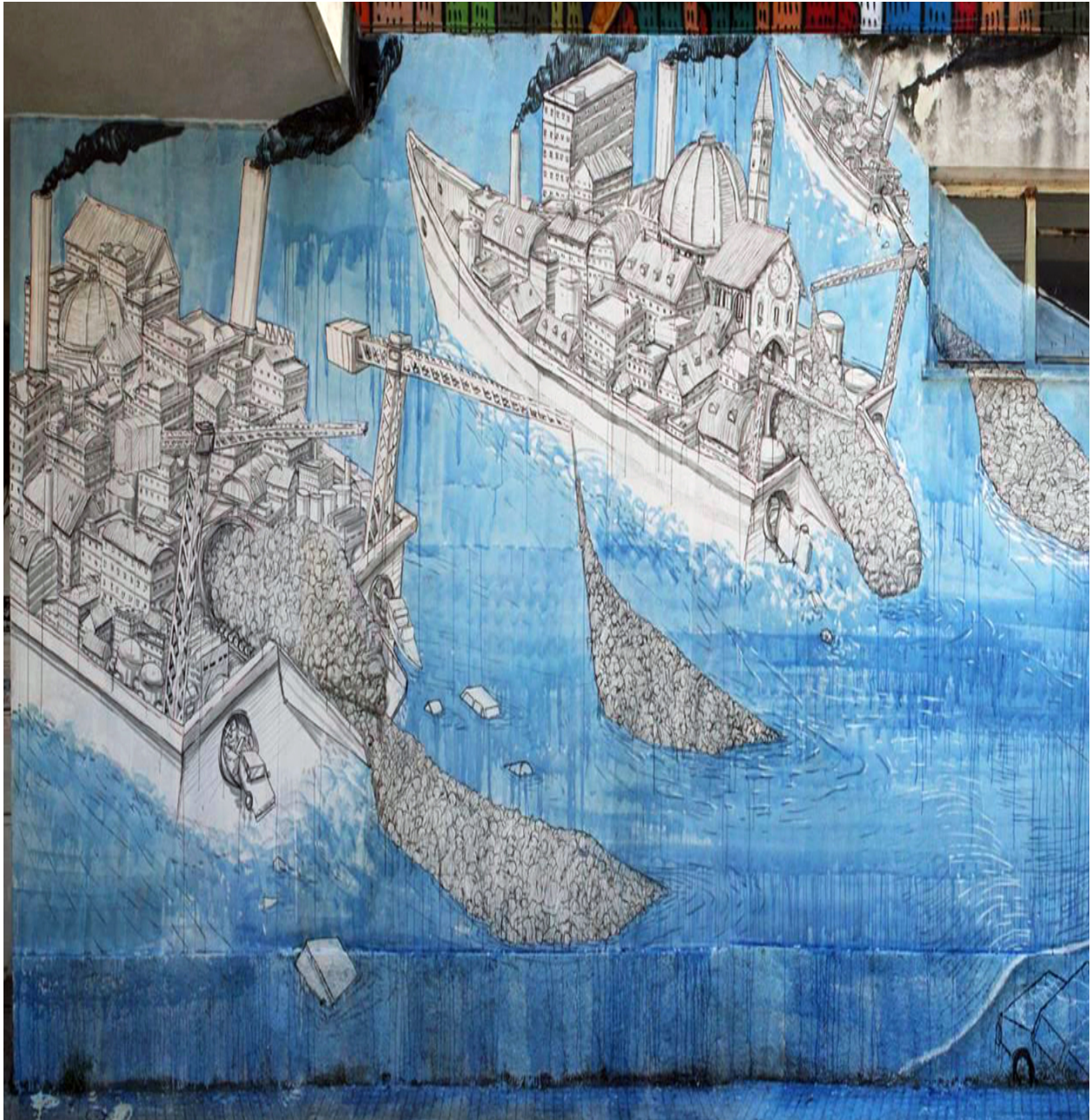
Fig. 59   **Blu**-Untitled

Another aspect that influenced his early career was the practice of a shared artistic action. Artists such as Dem, JR, Os Gêmeos, Sweza, Run and, above all Ericailcane, were his companions during nocturnal raids, where an anonymous creative participation overcame the need of signing their pieces. The collaboration with Ericailcane had its best results from 2003 to

2006. The two personalities complemented each other; while Blu was painting his characteristic human figures, Ericailcane made his typical animals. During those years, Blu also started experimenting with digital animation. Starting in 2004, some art galleries noticed Blu's artistic value and invited him to take part to individual or collective shows. Yet Blu, throughout his entire youthful career, has attempted to limit his presence within the official art world, preferring other kinds of venues. In the same interview quoted earlier, Blu stated: "In the past, I was working almost only illegally, going out during the night or painting abandoned buildings, there are also many occupied places where you can be free and paint what you want. Then, in the last year more and more permissions and commissions are coming so I often work in a official way." His nomadic spirit reached its peak in 2005. Beginning at the end of that year, Blu spent most of his time jumping travelling in self-guided trips, linking his itineraries to the festivals to which he was invited. On K.S. Interview with Blue, Blu explains why he painted walls in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras:

> I was interested in searching for public art, especially street painting, in those countries that have such a strong wall painting tradition. Especially in Central America, painting walls is still a common work, it is used mainly for advertising because is still cheaper than printing billboards. In Europe this thing disappeared in the past century. We were sure to find a perfect place for painting, and that is what we actually found" ("K.S. Interview with Blue").

During one of those events, particularly in the Festival *Murales de Octubre* in Managua, he painted a wall, stressing his artistic and political skills, on the Avenida Bolivar, where, in 1979, Víctor Canifrù celebrated the Sandinista revolution. His mural was named Hombre Banano (Banana Man) by the locals, referring to the protest of workers in banana plantations (**fig.60**).

Fig. 60   **Blu**-"Hombre Banano"

The following year, from October 2006 to December 2006, he returned to Central and South America for a long circuit of murals that included Mexico City, Guatemala City, Buenos Aires, and São Paulo, where, participating in the festival "A Conquista do Espaço" (The Conquest of Space) he came up with a new interpretation of Rio de Janeiro's "Christ of Corcovado" (**fig.61**). In his version, Christ is literally submerged by a mountain of guns and rifles.
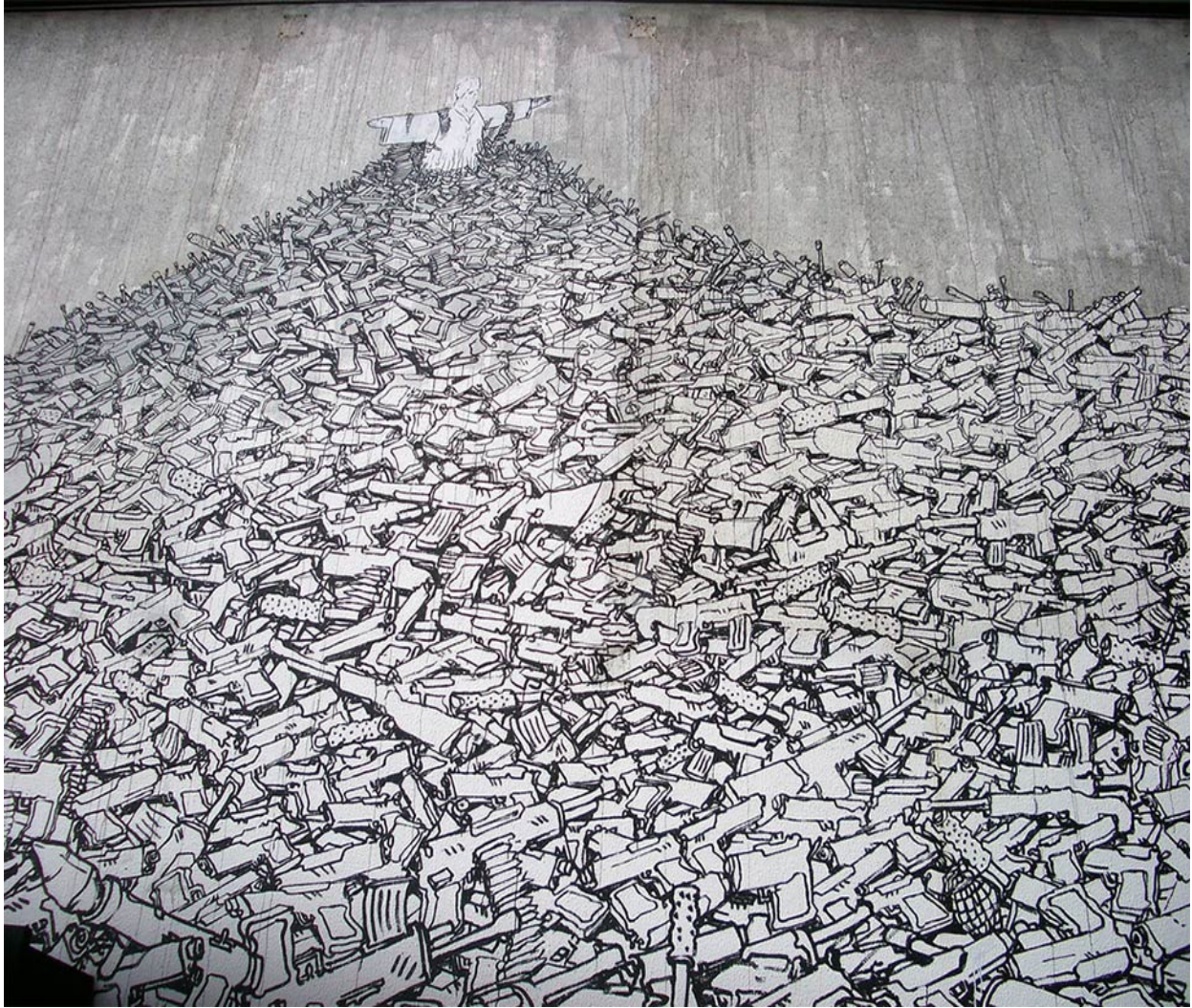
Fig. 61   **Blu**-"myChrist"

In 2009, Blu visited a for the festival "Memoria Canalla," then Montevideo, Uruguay, and, for the first time, Lima, Peru, where he painted the entire façade of an historical building in the central Avenida Arenales. In this huge mural, Blu seems to re-interpret the history of South America, a continent that has been violated by both ancient and modern conquistadores (**fig.62**). Following this political, nomadic, and artistic tour, we find Blu on the Bethlehem wall that separates the West Bank from Israel, painting, on a watchtower, a figure who naively tries to tear down this open-air prison with his finger. Blu is also very active in Europe. Italy, where he is based, can boast of having the majority of Blu's graffiti, both illegal and legal.

Fig. 62   **Blu**-"The Finished Wall"

Always with political themes, his works can be found especially in several "Centri Sociali". (XM24, TPO, Livello 57, Crash, Forte Prenestino, Cox 18, Leoncavallo), places that are between squats and self-managed cultural centers, spaces where he grew up as artivist. Besides Italy, he alterated walls in London, painting many pieces around Camden Town and Willow Street, and also at the Tate Modern. He worked in Germany on many occasions, mostly in Berlin, and always around Cuvrystrasse in a multi-ethnic neighborhood called Kreuzberg. In Spain, at the festival "Segundo Asalto" in Saragossa, along with the artists San, Tono, Nuria, and Nano, he painted a mural of a colossal Minotaur picking up an astonished man. In Barcelona, with the global economic crisis looming, he painted a threatening shark whose skin is completely covered in euro bills (**fig.63**).

Fig. 63   **Blu**-Untitled

In Eastern Europe, Blu has painted in Belgrade, Serbia, and in Wroclaw and Gdansk, Poland. In Gdansk, located on the industrial harbor where the destinies of twentieth-century Europe intersected, he used an abandoned hangar as the background for his short movie, "Morphing," where the symbols of this place marked by history are blended. Gdansk Harbor was indeed invaded first by the Nazis and then by the Red Army. Subsequently, it saw the birth of the trade union movement Solidarność (Solidarity) and finally, the victory of capitalism. Also, in 2008, Blu was in Prague, Czech Republic, for the "Names Festival" to paint a mural called Gaza Strip, where tanks and bulldozers are seen chasing each other along a Möbius strip.

Blu has visited a few times the United States, where his presence was discussed. Invited by Los Angeles's Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in 2010, for the exhibition "Art in the Streets," he created a politically charged piece featuring one-dollar bills over the face of several caskets, and offering a strong criticism of U.S. politics as well as economic and military power (**fig.64**).

Fig. 64   **Blu**-"Untitled"

The final result was that his work was buffed within twenty-four hours after making its way onto the Museum's façade. The Institution offered the following response:

> MOCA commissioned Blu, one of the world's most outstanding street artists to create a work for the north wall of The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA. The Geffen Contemporary building is located on a special, historic site. Directly in front the north wall is the Go For Broke monument, which commemorates the heroic roles of Japanese American soldiers, who served in Europe and the Pacific during World War II, and opposite the wall is the Los Angeles Veterans' Affairs Hospital. The museum's director explained to Blu that in this context, where MOCA is a guest among this historic Japanese American community, the work was inappropriate. MOCA has invited Blu to return to Los Angeles to paint another mural" (qtd. in "Los Angeles 3").

On his blog BluBlu "Los Angeles 3", the artist responded:

> "To me, this is a terrible explanation. The concept that street art and graffiti must be appropriate, to the point of not making political statements, is absurd and contrary to the history of the medium. In this context, I doubt the *Art on the Streets* show will be appropriate to its title ("Los Angeles 3").

In my opinion, we can say that his graphic mania is directly proportional to the epic scale of his murals. His paintings seem to interpret the architectural language of public spaces, reinventing them into new shapes. Thus, his murals are never detached from the places where they were conceived because Blu is a painter in the landscape, urban or industrial. He always tries to communicate with the society that inhabits those spaces, searching for the uniqueness of each place. He speaks a pop vocabulary that resembles the automatic writing process of the surrealist tradition with purely rhetorical processes. Blu's artistic practice has contributed to a radical change in the art market. His murals and videos are given for free to cities' public and on the World Wide Web. Blu's works appear abrupt because they are derived from the free creativity of an artist who has decided to occupy a position outside the sheltered field of art. As

magically as they appear, they can disappear, sometimes covered by other paintings by Blu himself, sometimes ruined by time and weather, but mostly erased by authorities in the name of tidiness.

Blu's aesthetic search is motivated by a belief in an open source philosophy, which is unique in beauty and persistent in its anarchical revolt against contemporary art conventions:

> "At the moment, I can live with my work. I sell some drawings and I make the money, I need to go on with my projects. I try to avoid other kind of works such as commissions from companies and advertising, which is something I don't really like. I'm not economically rich but I'm billionaire in happiness"("K.S. Interview with Blu").

Fig. 65   **Blu**-Untitled

In conclusion, Blu is not just a highly skilled mural painter but also one of those exceptional talents, spreading the political approach of street art around the world. Blu's work has become increasingly provocative and his popularity perfectly fits with the arch of street art's ascendancy into the mainstream. His murals demonstrate his interest in pushing boundaries (**fig.65**). His more political work often deals with victims of the corporate media's ability to turn anything into meaningless chatter, thus mentally numbing the masses. Blu's messages play with our perception of space (landscapes) and challenge us to look at places (mindscapes) we often overlook in a more critical way (**fig.66**).

Fig. 66   **Blu**-Untitled

3.8. JR

JR states that the street is "the largest art gallery in the world." He is a French street-urban *artivist* and guerrilla photographer who flyposts (the act of placing large posters in unauthorized places) the black-and-white photographic images of human faces across massive canvasses in urban and suburban landscapes across the globe. JR grew up in the suburbs of Paris where, as a teenager, he was a graffiti artist. He began taking photographs after finding a camera on a Paris metro car. At first, he would follow his graffiti artist friends taking action shots of them and pasting these images on walls in the city. In 2009, at age twenty-six, he was mounting large scale illegal projects with his photographs and in 2013, being 28, he was the youngest recipient of the TED award. His work highlights "simple juxtapositions that everyday people produce, while at the same time counteracting the reductive messages propagated by mainstream advertising and media" (Lewisohn 123). The French artist looks to the street to provide the canvas and atmosphere (landscape). The people that inhabit these spaces provide the context and create a connection (mindscape) between the two social realities. Through his artworks, he wants to reflect about political, economical and social problems. For one of his projects, "The Portraits of a Generation," started in 2005, JR utilized portraits of some inhabitants of the Parisian ghettos, and placed them in the downtown area. The work "drew attention to the economic gulf between affluent Parisians and the deprived residents of Clichy-sous-Bois, the scene of riots in recent times" (Lewisohn 124). Another significant project, Face2Face begun in 2006, led JR to Israel, where he produced portraits of people from both sides of the religious divide. The project featured images of ordinary Palestinians-such as taxi drivers, cooks, teachers that were pasted near to or below images of Israelis with the same job (**fig.67**).

Fig. 67   **JR**-"Face2Face"

This project was displayed on both sides of the separation wall, and despite the tense

political situation, it was met with positive reactions. Normally, the graffitis that exist in

Palestine are strictly political in nature, and while there was initial confusion from the public

concerning the purpose of this project, "interpretations varied from political to aesthetic readings

of the work" (123). His socio-political goal of increasing the population's critical capacity and

tolerance of diversity was reached. In fact, JR's artwork in both conflict and non-conflict areas

enable the viewer to "cut through the mediated preconceptions generated by the media" (123).

His street art exposes media stereotypes, while at the same time using the media attention to

spread an alternative message.

In 2008, JR began the project "Wrinkles of the City", wherein he captured images of the elderly in Shanghai, Los Angeles, and Cartagena, Colombia, seeing these citizens as representing the memory of the city, the artists pasted their large-scale black and white portraits in locations he felt spoke to the city's heritage. What is most striking about these photographs of these pieces is, first, the juxtaposition of weathered faces with battered buildings, a parallel that highlights how easily people neglect things considered old and worn out, and the way eventually this neglect can lead to a widespread forgetting (**fig.68**). Secondly, the sheer scale of the images creates an impact, as when an old woman's face on the side of an apartment building is flanked by skyscrapers and blue sky (**fig.69**). Ultimately, urban settings are home to hundreds of thousands or millions of faces just like this one.

Fig. 68   **JR**-"Wrinkles of the City"

Fig. 69   **JR**-"Wrinkles of the City"

To stress the deep connection between cities and citizens, a Los Angeles local website developed a project following the Los Angeles portion of "Wrinkles of the City", created and made accessible by Google map.[1] Each piece was marked on the map with a thumbnail photo of it and a link to the corresponding blog post. The website claims that the map will be updated as new pieces appear and asks people who will be searching L.A. for the "Wrinkles of the City" to respond with stories of their adventures. These artworks by JR are of a political nature. The intersection between internet, photography, street art, identity, history, and heritage takes audience participation one step further. For example, his 2011 project, titled "Inside Out," is a large-scale participatory art project with the goal of transforming messages of personal identity

into pieces of artistic work. Following a basic do-it-yourself way of artistic approach to cultural production, the French artist wants people all over the world to follow some rules (Upload a portrait. Receive a poster. Paste it for the world) in order to start a new global interaction between people and their urban environments. In my view, this process creates a social-artistic exchange with people that take on meaning when it is pasted up, creating a relationship between the architecture and a specific moment. In reality, it is not so much the image on its own that is meaningful; rather, it is what people do with the images that give meaning to "Inside Out". The artist states that these exhibitions will be documented, archived and viewable virtually. Through the website "Inside Out-A global Art Project", the viewers can select a photograph of a posted poster in its environmental context and then, by clicking on the image, the original portrait will be shown with the photographed person's statement, and country or origin. It will also show statistics related to the image and it will locate the poster on a Google map.

Fig. 70   **JR**-"Inside Out"

Before "Inside Out", JR created, in 2010, "Women Are Heroes", **fig.71**, a project consisting of a series of portraits alongside each woman's story. JR embarked on an ambitious quest to document the dignity of women in conflict zones and violent environments through his mural-sized portraits. He exhibited them in public space installations in local communities. The women are from Brazil, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Kenya, India, and Cambodia, and their stories range from Shaha Jaham in India, who founded an association called the Women's Association Against Dowries, to others who have lived through excruciating hardships. As Marco Berrebi states in the introduction to *Women Are Heroes*: "each of JR's photographs is an autonomous work. It exists through its own aesthetic, with no need to be explained. But the narrative gives it its emotional power" (qtd. in "Women Are Heroes: A Global Portrait of Strength in Hardship by French Guerrilla Artist-Activist JR").

Fig. 71   **JR-**"Women are Heroes"

In conclusion, JR is attempting to show representations of real inhabitants of the world that counter the dominant images projected through the mass media. Focusing on bringing art to "improbable places, in order to create projects so huge with the community that they are forced to ask themselves questions", JR uses public space to underscore the political, artistic, and social importance of public art ("Meet JR: Video interview and FAQ about the 2011 TED Prize winner"). In this regard, during the TED Prize speech said he affirmed:

> "The city's the best gallery I could imagine. I would never have to make a book and then present it to a gallery and let them decide if my work was nice enough to show it to people. I would control it directly with the public in the streets" ("Meet JR: Video interview and FAQ about the 2011 TED Prize winner").

3.4. An Urban Scenario: Women Street Artists

Street-urban art has always been a male-dominated scene, probably because, especially in the 1970s and 80s, at the beginning of this movement, "the physical risks involved in accessing train yards, gloomy alleyways, hanging around in dark subways lines at night, climbing over barbed wire and running from the police, along with the legal consequences, may seem highly intimidating for girls who would otherwise have liked to take up the street" (Adeline J. n.p.). However, artistic creativity knows no gender boundaries and street art evolved and diversified. Today, there are signs of the street-urban art world is opening its doors, recognizing, and inviting women to be active participants in street-urban art production.

Martha Cooper, an American photographer who has been documenting graffiti since the late 1970s, and who is widely thought of as the "godmother" of street-urban art, claims to have noticed an increase in the number of women participating in the scene: "there's definitely more women now. Before, women might have made up one 10th of a per cent, and now maybe it's one per cent. Street art is very democratic in that anybody can do it, and quite a few women that do it are good at it" (Wyatt n.p.). In fact, a string of events related to urban art and graffiti have provided female *artivists* with a very active presence.

In 2004, for example, the London exhibition *Something Else* boasted large-scale installations produced by women urban artists, such as Che Jen, Nuria,[44] Sasu,[45] and Swoon.[46] In the same year, the French graffiti Festival *Kosmopolite* was dedicated to female writers, hosting guests such as Klor,[47] Fafi,[48] ACB,[49] and Zori4. The year 2005 witnessed the birth of *Catfight*,

edited by F. Lady, the first online magazine devoted to "female graffiti update in order to get published and noticed for what we really do" (Wyatt n.p.).

In 2006, *éToiles urbaines*, an art show held in Paris, was entirely devoted to women's urban art, bringing together the works of thirty artists who agreed to work for ten days creating eighteen new works around the city. The same happened in 2012 in Atlanta at the *Living Walls Festival* and in 2013, at the Miami Art Basel, which offered "full voice to women in a holistic and powerful way that rather redefines the context of a graffiti/street art/tattoo/skater scene which sometimes veers too close to being overtly sexist, if not outright misogynist in its depiction of women and their roles" (BSA-BrooklynStreetArt n.p.).

Those events showed the juxtaposition of different styles and techniques, offering an overview of what female street-urban art is and evidence of the way each of them convey, or not, her feminine identity. But why should I focus on women street-urban artists? Is it important to consider the fact that a woman chooses to break out of conventional art spaces and take to the streets? I believe that my approach is necessary and useful because it shows the attitude of street-urban art that, together with its trans-nationality and trans-disciplinarity, creates the uniqueness of street-urban art across genders. Whereas today most women urban artists do not feel concerned with matters of respect owed to male artists, this was not the case of the pioneers. Young women like Barbara 62 (**fig.72**),[50] Eva 62,[51] and Lady Pink,[52] who "tagged the way" for future generations, struggled to have their skills recognized.

Fig.72   **AA.VV.-** "Bubble letters"

In fact, at the beginning, during the 1970s and 80s, it was more difficult, as expressed by Zori4:[53] "it was like a girl trying to enter the NBA. A lot of people just don't expect girls to get involved in a male field such as graffiti, like we didn't expect to see them getting involved in rap music, another notoriously male-dominated, macho field" (Wyatt n.p.). Today, it seems that the institutional acceptance of street-urban art as a genuine artistic expression has opened the door to women. To have a more complete analysis of the street-urban scenario, therefore, it is necessary to explore the case of female street-urban artists. At any rate, rather than being recognized as female or artists, most of the women define themselves as artists above all else: "I always believed that my style should not be feminine" (Wyatt n.p.), says Mickey. Nuria concurs: "I

always wanted to be considered a writer, not a female writer! I just wanna do my graffiti" (Wyatt n.p.). As mentioned, it has not always been like this for the earlier generation of writers. Lady Pink, a very committed woman artist of the New York City 1980s scene, explained that:

"it was a difficult field for a woman. There was the attitude that women were too weak and therefore a liability, or the attitude that they just couldn't do it. You had, as well, to throw your reputation in the dirt. Everyone thought you were a slut" (Wyatt n.p.) (**fig.73**).
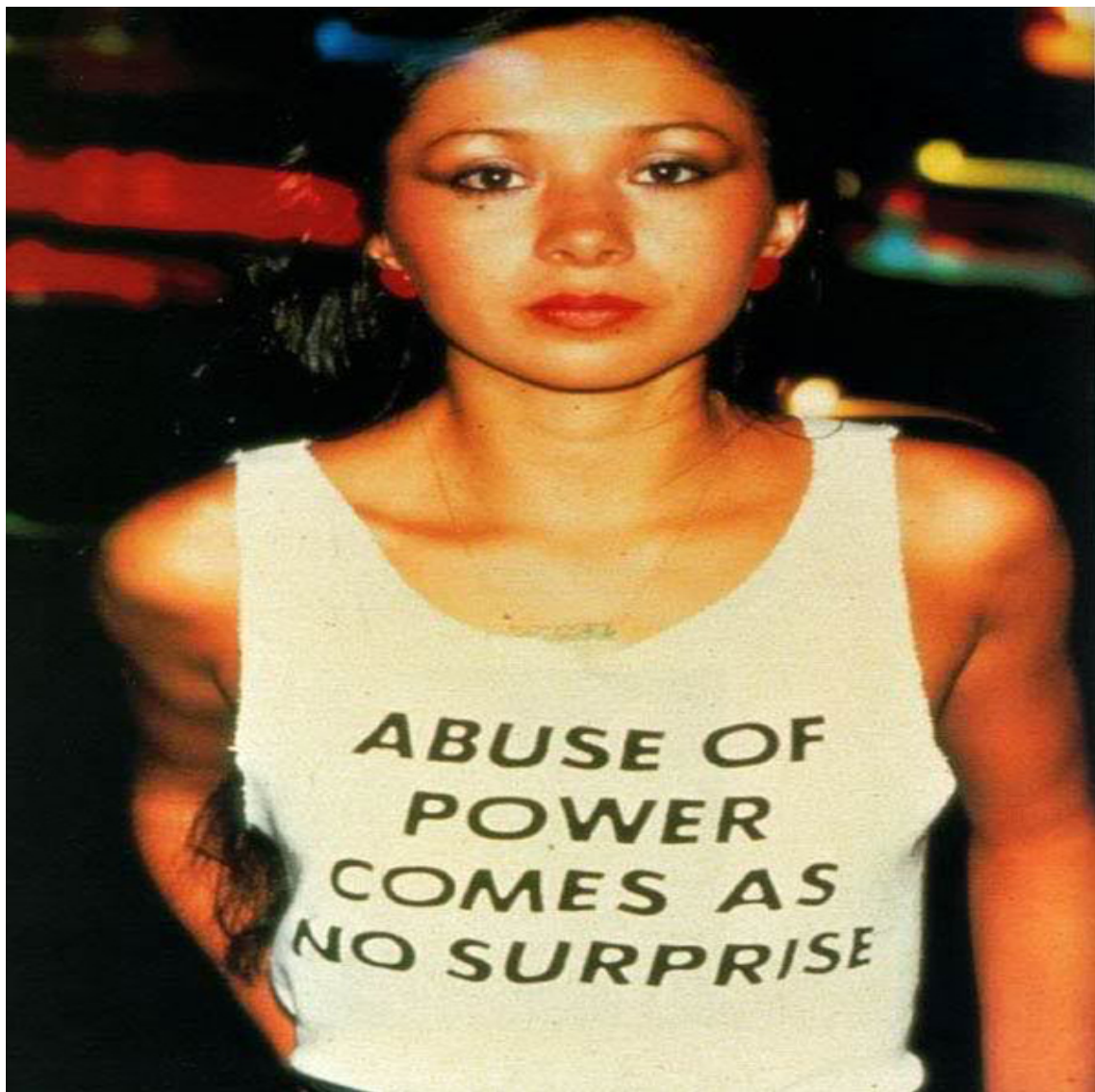
Fig. 73   **Lady Pink**-"Abuse of power comes as no surprise"

Therefore, thanks to the diversification and refinement of street-urban art techniques, the artistic creation process seems easier for female artists today. Fafi[54] and Koralie (**fig.74**),[55] for example, often paint by day, using not only paint and brushes, but also stencils and posters, two artistic tools that did not exist in the past.

Fig. 74   **Koralie-**"Geishka"

These artworks make a difference also in the way they are perceived by the passers-by who often associate spray cans with vandalism. In any case, acting creating art in the street

remains a challenge for any urban artist. The participation of women within street-urban art culture surely brings a new dimension to it: a different touch or approach. Missy Elliot, an American rapper, sing-songwriter, and street-urban art producer,[56] defines it in this way: "we are adding our flavor to what the men are doing and making it our own" (Wyatt n.p.); Miss Riel (**fig.75**),[57] also thinks that "girls do have another kind of sensitivity than men, which often shines through, but that doesn't mean that it is better or worse, it is something else" (Wyatt n.p.).

Fig. 75   **Miss Riel**

In their first pieces, these women probably wanted to counteract the male dominated scene. Claw,[58] a New York-based graffiti writer turned fashion designer, remembers her first

experience as a writer or urban painter, admitting that she was "envious (of boys) and wanted to write (her) name too" (Wyatt n.p.). Likewise, Toofly,[59] a graffiti pioneer, states, "my cousins tagged up here and there, so I did it too whenever I hung out. It's that rebellious spirit you get when you're a teenager" (Wyatt n.p.); Lady Pink concludes: "I was out there to prove myself" (Wyatt n.p.). As the years go by, the artist's style evolves and becomes more personal. Her creative tools also diversify (canvases, installations, clothing, toys…), as well as the contexts (exhibitions, illustrations for magazines, books, commissions, etc.). As a result, the goal of the artistic expressions becomes to provide a direct and free contact and interaction with the viewers, to improve urban spaces, and to spread out socio-political messages. Today, there are several well-known street-urban artists who have overcome the limitations attached to being in the minority. This may be an indication that the world of street-urban art is becoming more inclusive and that audiences have also been receptive to their work. In this multicolored and diverse artistic reality the most interesting are: Aleteia, Alice Mizrachi, Alice Pasquini, Anopsy, Bastardilla, Cake, Empty, Ephameron, Erica il Cane, Fafi, Faith 47, Guerrilla Girls, Klor, Koralie, Microbo, Nuria, Pax Paloscia, Hyuro, Imminent Disaster, Issa Abou-Issa, Lady Pink, Miss Van, Sheryo, Shin Shin, Sofía Maldonado, Tati Suárez, Swoon, Toofly, Vexta, Yola, Zabou, Zina, Zoulette, and Wing.

In conclusion, the original men-only vibe street-urban art scene is changing, and women artists are beginning to make, literally, their mark, reflecting the problems in their communities, beautifying degraded areas, and especially breaking down gender barriers and stereotypes. And they are doing it in different ways, through various techniques, not because they are women but because they are artists. For this reason, I focus this part of my research especially on the two

artists I consider the more representative of this phenomenon, from an aesthetical, social and political perspective: Faith47 and Swoon.

Faith47, for example, who first started doing traditional graffiti on the streets of Cape Town, South Africa in 1997, claims to have never felt excluded from the male-dominated scene: "I think in a way actions speak louder than words. Women need to take the steps to become street artists if they want to, and it's not like they can't. It's not just street art, if you look at other sectors, a lot of things are male-dominated" (Wyatt n.p.). In an interview for Freshness Magazine, Swoon adds: "Sometimes I think that my mom did all that work in the seventies so that I could have a normal life where it's not about being a female artist, but about being an artist" (Wyatt n.p.). I believe that the final goal, as expressed by the Canadian street-urban artist Maya Hayuk, is to discuss street-urban art in a gender neutral way, underlining just the artistic, political, and communicative uniqueness: "Hopefully in the future we don't have to do all women or all men or all anything shows but just shows on all awesome" (BSA-BrooklynStreetArt n.p.).

Unfortunately, articles like "In search of a female Banksy: Aiko[60] and Faith47 take on a male-dominated street art world," published by *The Independent* (2013)*,* are not helping because Aiko and Faith47 are presented only through their relationship with a specific male artist. In my view, the error goes beyond the title of the piece: "After collaborating with Banksy," Wyatt writes, "Aiko gained fame. Shouldn't we be thinking critically about why that might be the case, if that's actually the case, how is fame defined here?" (Wyatt n.p). Aiko and Faith47 are not "female Banksys" and even if Faith47 is obviously not her birth name, as in the case the British street-urban superstar, it t is unfair to force a comparison between those artists. These

women artists do not need to be related to male artists to improve their careers. They produced street-urban masterpieces before appearing in Banksy's movie "Exit through the Gift Shop."

Fortunately, we have a lot of artworks that are not linked at all to the male-dominated mainstream and that show us the way to follow. One of the most interesting urban scenarios, for example, is Egypt, which is becoming a context where street-urban art is socially and politically blooming, and where it is more and more common to express different voices across walls and buildings. A lot of artworks are in solidarity with women rebels, refusing any sort of violence (**fig.76**), and are demanding women's rights. In this way, street-urban art productions in Cairo have become a way for women's rights to be advertised as a legitimate part of the mainstream revolutionary movement, which can help recuperate collective spaces.

Fig. 76   **Mira Shihadeh**-"No to Street Harrassment"

3.4.1. Having Faith(47) in our cities

The South-African Faith47, an autodidact artist inspired by global socio-political concerns and her continuous travels, is one of the best-known women street-urban art producers in the world and she is recognized for her unique murals and exhibitions. Based in South Africa, (she lives in Cape Town, with her husband and fellow artist, Dal), Faith47 has established herself internationally, exhibiting her work in mainstream galleries (Montreal, Vancouver, Cape Town, Los Angeles, Paris, Rome, London, São Paulo, Shanghai, Berlin, Tel Aviv, Miami, Johannesburg) and participating in underground projects all over the world (including *Escape 2010* in Vienna, *Gossip Well Told* -2011- in London, *Inner Walls* -2011- in Milan, *World Open Walls -2012-* in Miami, *Wall Therapy* -2012- in New York, *Mural Project* -2012- in Tel Aviv, *Paris Free Wall* -2012- in France, *Nuart Festival* -2013- in Stavanger, Norway, *Festival Avant-Garde Urbano* -2013- in Tudela, Spain, *Pow! Wow! Hawaii* -2013- in Honolulu, *Los muros hablan* -2013- in Puerto Rico, and *Memorie Urbane* -2013- in Gaeta, Italy).

Combining the city walls stories with various symbolic metaphors (mostly animals, angels, divinities), Faith47 represents a different, artistic and socio-political way of seeing and interacting with the reality of our cities. The complex beauty she finds in abandoned spaces inspires her images painted onto the city's canvas. The final result is the formation of new urban narratives that create, in my view, the "perfect" passage from urban landscapes to urban mindscapes. In fact, her deep familiarity with lost spaces guides citizens to pay more attention to our urban environments, and her artistic suggestions help to open our minds to interactions between social tragedies and political dreams, personal memories and collective urban realities. She leaves her public traces with giant and intense murals that, as expressed in an interview,

reflect well her interest in the "architecture of neglect, the textures, marks, and scratches left in public spaces that people walk past every day but never see" (Statedmag. "Faith47 interviewed by Indigo".n.p). Her artworks match my socio-political interpretation of street-urban art, the central idea of my dissertation, because she interrupts the passive flow of urban human traffic, adding humanity to the noise of the city. As mentioned above, she develops her artistic and socio-political research painting on unconventional places and spaces:

> I'd like to discover more abandoned spaces in Africa and other under-developed nations-states. War-torn buildings, inner city high rises that have been squatted. I want to study the textures and scrawlings of what people leave behind. Worn-down steps, postered walls, dirtied corners hiding sleeping vagrants from the public eye. Stowaways' poems and gang tags. Random thoughts scribbled on walls, dirty hand marks, smoke-stained walls. (Statedmag. "Faith47 interviewed by Indigo" n.p)

Faith47's approach contributes decisively to a diverse socio-cultural celebration and to an urban regeneration of our daily life spaces, helping to transform previously avoided areas into popular and socializing destinations. Apart from her aesthetic ability and sensitiveness, I also chose Faith47 to represent the female street-urban art world because she is able to speak for and about human and urban differences. Floating between underground streets and mainstream galleries, she reinterprets tags and graffiti, created by social range and produced by subalterns, raising and spreading social, political, and artistic messages: "her interactions give form to deeply penetrating visual enigmas resonating with our impermanence and our elusive relationship with symbols and memories, dreams and parables" (ZA. "Streets ahead in the realm of public art" n.p).

At the beginning of her career, Faith47 was inspired primarily by the social realities with which she is faced in South Africa. She was interested in "juxtaposing the vast difference between the promises of a better life brought in with the New South Africa post-Apartheid and the harsh reality of the lives of most South Africans" (Nuart Festival. "Faith47 (ZA)" n.p). Her "Freedom Charter" project (**fig.77**), which featured phrases from the iconic freedom charter document on inner city streets, is a clear example of this concept.

Fig. 77   **Faith47**- "The Freedom Charter"

In later works, the South African artist developed a different sensitivity expressed with conceptual and existential symbolism, which dominated her walls. Faith47 started mixing the hard realities of the human world with more spiritual interpretations and aspirations to find an

inner understanding. The human condition and our relationship to animals and nature are recurring themes.

For example, in 2012 she created in Shanghai "The Taming of the Beasts" (**fig. 78**), an image of two pale white rhinos on the side of a half-demolished house in central Shanghai with highrises in the background.

Fig. 78   **Faith47-**"The Taming of the Beasts"

An analysis of the work allows us to point out the presence of three different historical passages: the first and historical one is represented by the wild animal; the second one and the third, representing past and future, are merged in the contrast between the demolition and the construction of new buildings.

Faith47 explained in an interview the reasons she decided to create this kind of art work right there:

> I wanted to paint the ghosts of the rhino in Asia, specifically because I wanted to find them a symbolic resting place. In Shanghai there are a lot of buildings that are getting knocked down to build high rise flats. The families that don't want to move out are called the nail families. You can see there are people living there- even on the second floor. It is so rotten; it is really bad. The government knocks down the infrastructure around them and just leaves them to move out in their own time. I assume it's some kind of tactic to get them to move. The fact that they are becoming extinct resonates with the plight of the rhinos that are also being lost due to expanding civilization. (ZA. "Streets ahead in the realm of public art" n.p)

Between 2012 and 2013, she presented, both in studio and in the streets, "Fragments of a Burnt History" (**fig.79**). This project presents many elements of South African daily life with all the political, ideological, and social contradictions between government and people on the streets. The installation of work communicates the emotions produced by the interlacement between the nostalgic of traditional urban architectures, and the new sense of the history that city's streets are dramatically representing.

It is in this physical and symbolic interstice that the power of her art explodes. Faith47′s work is, in fact, deeply connected with the street as context and as source of inspiration. The city both dictates the direction of the labor and appears as a unique space of expression where lots of conflicts are formulated. Faith47 is capable to import elements from the streets and propose them

to another audience. By so doing, she preserves the symbols of a common, rich and dynamic

history. In the exhibition and in the streets, there were multiple images of men waiting in queues

that represent the sentiments expressed by Faith47 in her artist's statement:

> Miners are waiting for justice. Workers are waiting for a living wage. People are
> waiting for service delivery. Refugees are waiting for assistance. Men are waiting
> for jobs. We are all waiting for an honest politician. So many people are waiting
> for others to do things first. To take the blame. To do things for them. To take the
> fall. To build the country. To admit defeat. There has been so much waiting in this
> country that much time has been lost. (Wooster Collective. "The long wait by
> Faith47" n.p)

Fig. 79   **Faith47-**"Fragments of a Burnt History"

Following this perspective and supported by another of her statements, "cities need a human touch, not adverts and billboards," Faith47 produced the inspiring "The People Shall Govern" mural (**fig.80**). Rendered in simple white and red, and borrowing the font of Coca-Cola Classic, Faith47, in fact, is bantering consumerism and trying to pay more attention to social inequality in South Africa and the world:

> The People shall govern will always hold a soft spot in my heart. I got permission for this wall and had to paint it within 2 days. It was very touch and go from many angles. A little shaky. But it came off in the end almost as if it had been there from the 80′s and i love the statemental effect of it, which on second glance, is more of a question, a ridiculous and infinitely tragic sentence. (Designwars. "Faith47 interview– the graffiti artist whose…inspiration stems from intuitive and existential questions" n.p)

Fig. 80   **Faith47**-"The People Shall Govern"

To better understand Faith47 background and to realize why I chose this woman artist to represent the very diverse female street-urban art scene, I think it is useful to pay attention to some of her answers in an interview carried out by Matthew J, for the urban culture online journal *senseslost* (senseslost.com). Faith47's answer to the first question ("Who are your heroes? Both growing and currently?) can be interpreted as a political and art statement showing her influences and references. In fact, without hesitation, she said, "My mum. My friends. My son. Wealz130. Patti Smith. The Zapatistas. Naomi Klein. Noam Chomsky. Brenda Fassie.[61] Steve Biko.[62]" (*Senselost*. "Faith47 Interview: REDUX". n.p). Apart from her family affections and her artistic influences (the South African graffiti pioneer Wealz130, the punk rock singer Patti Smith, and the "Queen of African Pop" Brenda Fassie), the other answers, represented by the agency played by political agents (Klein, Chomsky, Biko) and by the Zapatista movement, are strongly coherent with her artistic cultural productions and her socio-political messages.

Another important inspiration for Faith47 are women and Third World people, who represent subalternity. Explaining her epic mural "Restless Debt Of Third World Beauty" (**fig.81**) painted in Cape Town-South Africa, to the ATM Berlin Gallery webpage, the artist declared: "both the female and the Third World have been oppressed and raped. Despite this they are powerfully resilient and form the backbone of strength in society their voices silenced in the media with its strong western male gaze" (ATM Gallery. "ATM Berlin Faith47". n.p).

Fig. 81   **Faith47-**"Restless Debt Of Third World Beauty"

Faith47 grew up with a strong awareness of her diverse social and physical surroundings, becoming artistically able to represent the dramatic socio-political reality, systemic poverty, and persistent inequality in the post-apartheid "Rainbow Nation," which she experienced and that have formed and deformed South Africa:

> It took me a while to sift through the impressions and experiences that I'd witnessed. Not only first-hand experiences, but things that happened to close friends of mine and society in general. I dug into the country to feel the sand and grit that made the madness of the headlines a reality. The world's chaos and the sea of desperation. The violent crime and ignorance contrasted with a profound open heartedness. The contradictions were confusing. I felt somehow responsible and helpless. I felt shame for the color of my skin. In retrospect I know that is not a healthy reaction, but I think this country twists you up like that. I channeled a lot of my introspection through my work, it's been a form of psychotherapy and I've got a much clearer vision now. I see the situation in South Africa as a microcosm of the world. The extreme gap between rich and poor. Geographical red and green zones. (Bsrat Mezghebe. "Faith47. Street Art and South Africa's contradictions". n.p).

Apart from this homeland oriented artistic production, Faith47 is also able to metabolize the global ideas of inequality, alienation, political injustice, economical and cultural oppression (**fig.82**), and human relationship, repurposing public space as a canvas for reflection and dialogue: "Public space is part of this, so is the internet and all forms of interactive media. Individuals should have the right to use these public spaces for music and the arts. What goes up on that space is part of a new culture, which takes ownership of the space around it and finds its own voice" (Bsrat Mezghebe. "Faith47. Street Art and South Africa's contradictions". n.p).

Faith47, in conclusion, is one the best representatives of the female street-urban art scene. She delivers powerful social messages not only to women, but to the wider public as well. In this way, her public art forms are an integral part of our social framework and a particular place in the history of a contemporary struggle for a more democratic society.

Fig. 82   **Faith47-**"The Future: Neoliberalism=Colonialism"

3.4.2. *Swoon*ing our cities

The famous street-urban artist Swoon's real name is Caledonia "Callie" Dance Currie, a name chosen by her alternative parents in 1977. It is important to underline her familial environment because it influenced her life and art. In fact, "her childhood home in Daytona Beach, Florida, was a Petri dish of countercultural beliefs where the creative chaos of self-discovery was always met with praise. Everyone was like: You can do this! So, I was like: That's it, I'm an artist!" (Kurland, Andrea. "Swoon. The Lattice Effect". n.p). Immersed in this kind of reality, she naturally became an artist!

In 1996, in fact, attracted by the richness of the street-urban art scene, the artist decided to move to New York City, where join started the Pratt Institute School of Art. In 1999, inspired by the Chinantla Tuxtepec women sewing collectives of Oaxaca (Mexico) as well as by Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Gordon Matta-Clark, German Expressionism, and Indonesian shadow puppets, Swoon started pasting intricate figures around New York and embedding familiar faces into the blank spaces of her world. Following this art concept mixing all those influences, and combining her classic portraiture skills with creative paper cuts and colorful print makings, Swoon reacted to the art world's rigidity and to the academia's distance from real world: "It was about addressing that feeling like there's no place for you in the city", she explained in an interview (Kurland, Andrea. "Swoon. The Lattice Effect". n.p).

In her social, political, and artistic crusade, Swoon decided to create in and for the streets, exposing her artwork in urban contexts. In this way, she accepted the ephemeral nature and the decay of art pieces, favoring, instead, their interaction with various environments, and reflecting diverse communities. Accepting the fragility of her paper print art works, which can only survive

for a short period of time exposed to natural elements, Swoon wants her art to become part of the space they inhabit, and to interact with people, thus creating an action-reaction process that has, as its ultimate goal (as expressed in Chapter 2), a new urban mindscapes foundation. Being part of an interactive structure, these life-size prints help people reclaim an alteration and humanization of our urban-visual cityscapes. They also aim to create dialogues and common interests in our societies (**fig.83**). For these reasons, Swoon carefully picked the spots of her artistic productions, trying to enliven forgotten areas of our public spaces and to open up a dialogue between the artwork and the walls that may reveal our cities' materials and histories.

Fig. 83   **Swoon-**New York

In consonance with the her socio-political interpretation of art and her support of human and artistic collaborations, Swoon has worked with various groups and collectives, including the Madagascar Institute,[63] an art group that specializes in large-scale sculptures and rides, live performances, and guerilla art events; the Toyshop Collective,[64] a multifaceted group that modified hundreds of Brooklyn billboards; Black Label,[65] an anarchist bicycle-art group; Justseeds,[66] a Californian artist cooperative; and Glowlab,[67] a group of artists who produce experimental work related to cities and psycho-geography). She is also a founding member of Miss Rockaway Armada,[68] a group of artists that constructed a raft from reclaimed materials and sailed it down the Mississippi while making stops and giving performances along the way.

In the summer of 2005, Swoon created her first solo exhibition at Deitch Projects Gallery,[69] where she installed her collection of wheat paste prints and cutouts, transforming the façade of the gallery into a sprawling cityscape. Since then, she has shown internationally, both within the scope of institutions and out on the streets, and has become widely recognized as one of the more influential women in the international street-urban art scene. In fact, after her first exhibition, Swoon has been very prolific and her artworks can now be found not just in various corners or galleries of New York City, but also in Philadelphia, New Orleans, San Francisco, Cuba, London, Berlin, Rome, Barcelona, Prague, Lisbon, Venice, Cadiz, and a number of other cities all over the world.

It is interesting to notice her ability to connect indoor and outdoor urban spaces, interlacing, like Faith47, daily life (represented by the streets and its people) with main stream scenarios (represented by museums and galleries). For example, Swoon's formal exhibitions are often populated by realistic paper silhouettes of street people, often her friends and family. Those silhouettes, which play in the streets and interact with each other and with our cities, are able to

reach indoor and outdoor spaces, real and metaphoric walls, creating new cityscapes based on Swoon's unique inventions and on our everyday life. Another important aspect of her art is her attention to gender issues and to women's representation in the society:

> 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. But now I think to artistically reflect on women's issues is great. Any of those sorts of factors that show the position of gender in these larger settings are useful. It's clear that there is a certain voice to be heard. Furthermore now I enjoy when people see that some of the things I make, are made by a woman for women. (Elizabeth A. Sackler. "Center for Feminist Art. Feminist Art Base: Swoon" n.p)

The experience of living in Kenya and collaborating, with a group called Equality Effect,[70] has also influenced Swoon's art. She has expressed her concern for the situation of women in that country: "There is an epidemic of rape against women and children going on in Kenya. This organization is taking on the problem at different cultural levels. They do everything from rescue women from unsafe situations, to take on the legal system. I teamed up with them to spend a week with the girls" (*Art Voices Magazine*. "Swoon". n.p).

Her most interesting street-urban art creation related to women is a 2008 collaborative project called "Portrait of Sylvia Elena" (**fig.84-85-86**). Developed by Swoon and Tennessee Jane Watson,[71] a documentarian and social activist, in the Honey Space exhibition area,[72] in New York, the socio-artistic project memorialized one of the first victims in the widespread killings of young women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, where over 500 women and girls have been confirmed killed and more than 1000 have disappeared. At first, most visitors were lost or stumbled upon the unmarked gallery, where a small framed note on the wall invited them to enter and to descend into the raw basement to see the piece (**fig.84**).
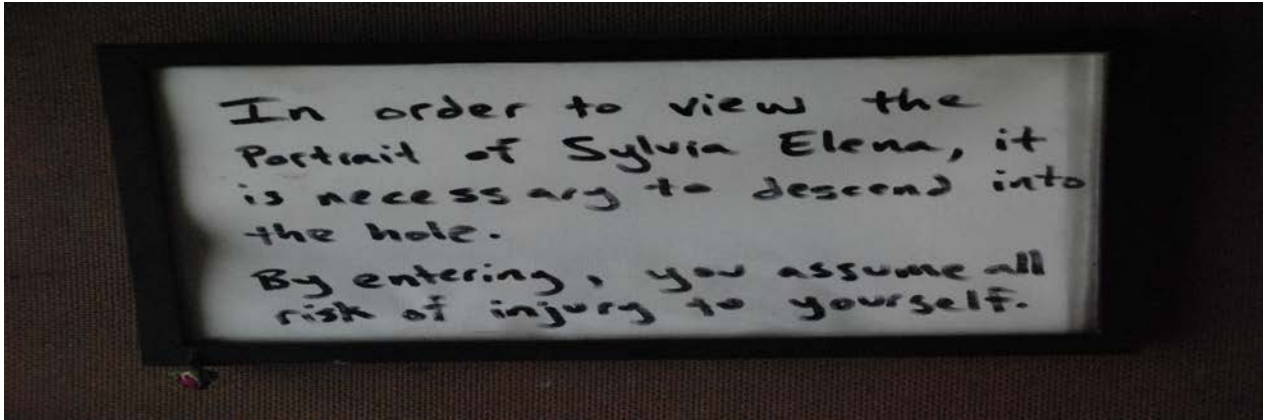
Fig. 84   **Swoon-Watson** "Portrait of Sylvia Elena"

Before descending, visitors were attracted by the altar created on the table, which was made out of flowers, candles lighting the posters of the disappeared women, photographs of the commemorative pink crosses spread along the roads of Juarez, and snapshots of the women and girls among their friends and family before their tragic disappearances. Afterward, an impervious ladder(**fig.85**)

Fig. 85   **Swoon-Watson** "Portrait of Sylvia Elena"

invited viewers to descend to the underground, where the visitor, already submerged in the somber mood of the installation, found Swoon's portrait of Sylvia Elena (**fig.86**), the first victim, surrounded by a rabble of paper-cut butterflies (symbolic of lost souls), and sound-tracked by audio interviews with bereaved mothers.

Fig. 86   **Swoon-Watson** "Portrait of Sylvia Elena"

Swoon and Tennessee Jane Watson worked alongside the collective Nuestras Hijas de Regreso:[73] "I'm interested in travelling to places where people are organizing themselves and just kind of figuring out the daily thing of how to survive" (Kurland, Andrea. "Swoon. The Lattice Effect". n.p). Apart from the strong emotions evoked by the three steps installation, I want to stress Swoon's ability to play with inside and outside spaces, drastically transforming a safe guarded New York gallery into a Mexican-American's border area. This connection between daily life walls and galleries in an exhibition has street-urban art as common

denominator and allows people to strengthen their critical capacity against gender brutalities, and to hybridize both realities, transforming streets into reflection spaces and formal artistic containers into public expressions places. Along with her prints and cutout installations, Swoon took part in several homemade flotilla projects that were part floating artwork, part performance, part ecological projects (the boats were always made using recycled material), part mobile utopia: "Swimming Cities of Serenissima" (**fig.87**) down the Mississippi River in 2007; "Swimming Cities of Switchback Sea" down the Hudson River and up the East River in 2008; and "The Clutchess of Cuckoo" from Slovenia to crash the Vienna Biennale in 2009. During these artistic and aquatic performances, Swoon did not to forget her natural habitat: the cities. Interviewed by the online magazine *Arrested Motion*, the artist said: "The connection between the boats and the street work is in the impulse to create art that interacts with the world in ways that do not depend upon a protected institutional setting" (Arrested Motions. "The Swimming Cities of Serenissima". n.p).

Fig. 87   **Swoon**- "Swimming Cities of Serenissima"

In 2010, Swoon returned to her roots in street-urban art by posting up her wheat paste cutouts on the streets of northern Philadelphia during the printmaking festival *Philagrafika 2010* (**fig.88**). She installed printed paper figures in different locations, meant to be discovered by accident and left to be acted upon by their surroundings, reminding viewers that artifice and art can be found anywhere and everywhere. They are, as Swoon says, "a moment of recognition, a wink from another human presence which is there and not there" ("Philagrafika2010: Swoon" n.p).

Fig.88   **Swoon**-"Philagrafika2010"

Swoon also expressed her socio-political ideas on three other socio-artistic projects.

The first one, titled "Konbit Shelter," is a sustainable building project begun in 2010 with the objective of sharing knowledge and resources through the creation of homes and community spaces in post-earthquake Haiti; the second project, *"Transformazium"* (**fig.89**), was based in Braddock, Pennsylvania, where she and four other artists took over an abandoned 1880s United Brethren Church and its adjacent lot, turning it into an experiential learning and arts-based community center;

Fig. 89   **Swoon-**"Transformazium"

and the third creation, "Dithyrambalina" (**fig.90**), was a permanent, interactive musical instrument sculpture for the Bywater neighborhood of New Orleans.

Fig. 90   **Swoon-** "Dithyrambalina"

In her next exhibition (April-August 2014 at the Brooklyn Museum), "Submerged Motherlands," she will create "a site-specific installation in a rotunda gallery, transforming it into a fantastic landscape centering on a monumental sculptural tree with a constructed environment at its base, including sculpted boats and rafts, figurative prints and drawings, and cut paper foliage" (Brooklyn Museum. "Swoon. Submerged Motherlands". n.p).

In conclusion, Swoon, even if she has reached a considerable success, continues to follow her mission, making her art available to the public and creating a community in which its occupants are in constant dialogue with one another, or at least taking an active interest in their public spaces. Bypassing the borders between legality and illegality and overstepping the strict limits imposed by the male-female paradigm, she celebrates everyday people and explores social and environmental issues. Her street-urban art works challenge us to take our space back and to become active participants in the public realm. It challenges us to stop and stare. Swoon attempts to create a dialogue, sewing and weaving (**fig.91**) together community members, urban living spaces, and our lives, thus increasing our interaction with forgotten urban landscape and bringing a socio-political transformation through creativity going entirely against the priorities of well renowned museums or institutions.

Fig. 91   **Swoon-** "Weaving lives"

Contradicting the majority of the literature surrounding street-urban art, which is quite sexist and male dominated, I try, in this part of my dissertation, to underline how not only Faith47 and Swoon, but also street-urban women artists in general, are representing a revolutionary change, showcasing their art as an expression of empowerment in the process. I demonstrated how women street-urban artists occupy and politicize our cities, redefining some phallocentric stereotypes by inserting marginal or subaltern female voices in different visual and aesthetic ways (graffiti, murals, stickers, posters, installations, wheat pastes). It is also important to note that the artists I analyzed are not following their male counterparts; in fact, women street-urban artists are, in many cases, unique in style, subject matter, medium, and intention (**fig.92**).

Fig. 92   **Tatyana Fazlalizadeh**-"Stop telling women to smile"

However, it is unfortunately still true that women artists are often discussed in the context of their gender struggling within the social and artistic scene, and that these struggles are often linked to the under-representation of female artists. Fortunately, this injustice y appears to be positively shifting.

At least street-urban art is changing, becoming more democratic, and, paying more attention to the skills, techniques, ideas, messages of the artwork than to commercial, anachronistic, and masculine standards and representations. Cities, streets, walls, as collective and participatory spaces, are the ideal containers for socio-political, and aesthetic transformations, and they offer everyone, without gender distinctions, the chances to become active and interactive, with our urban environments, citizens

4. Conclusion

"Imagine a city where graffiti wasn't illegal,
a city where everybody drew whatever they liked.
Where every street was awash with a million colours and little phrases.
Where standing at a bus stop was never boring.
A city that felt like a party where everyone was invited, not just the estate agents and barons of big business.
Imagine a city like that and stop leaning against the wall—it's wet."

Banksy

Street-urban art is a productive venue to propose socio-political and aesthetic changes. Twenty-first century globalized urban spaces are newly shaped by the fact that geographically disparate people, artists, and places are now strongly connected. Today, every cultural practice can have global implications. All the artists considered in this study are still working together. In this sense, street art is a catalyzer for a socio-political and aesthetic urban renaissance. Artists creating urban artistic expressions in multiple localities can form socio-political bonds and create patterns of artistic resistance. I consider street-urban art not only a subculture but also a source of collective identity formation. As a popular form of implicit political participation it is capable of generating socio-political ties between far-flung people and places. In particular, street-urban art has great relevance for looking at a horizontal democracy.

This creative expression is, in many ways, a "preeminent example of popular resistance, spatial resistance, and of a new (g)local resistance." Street-Urban art re-appropriates the built environment, thereby challenging the power of panoptic authority. Actions are communicated across the city and the world. In Stuart Hall's words, "popular culture is organized around the contradiction: the popular forces versus the power-bloc" (238).This concept of cultural

appropriation and reinterpretation is often related to the idea of the struggle between ordinary consumers and the powerful, hegemonic elite, which is central to much popular culture discourse. Street-urban artivists- marking a street corner, postering a building, or altering a billboard– are a response to the commercialized environment. They grant it a new popular cultural life.

Street-urban art (as seen in my study of works by Banksy, Os Gêmeos, Blu, and JR) participates in or acts upon urban environments, as well as in denizens' lives. Created in urban environments, it is an aesthetic medium for self-expression and resistance. It also responds to a set of cultural practices forming local and global social networks, which reclaim public space and spread ideas as popular communication. Street-Urban art is not so much about decoration or storytelling as it is about making this creative act public. Street-Urban art's effectiveness is based on acts of transgression. It makes use of an overtly public medium to produce its eye-catching message, inspiring an "urban mythology." Even graffiti artists included in gallery shows stress the importance of getting their work out to the wider public of the city streets. In the post-industrial era of economic restructuring, social divisions are deeply determined by the market and by established social orders.

As a result, there are less and less modes of opposition to the power-bloc: it is understood that the masses must follow the cultural commodities provided by the power-bloc. Street-Urban art rejects this by re-appropriating commercialized urban environments and promoting new

meaning and a socio-artistic interaction between people. In other words, street-urban art is a large, impacting, visual and spatial form of popular resistance (**fig.93**).

Fig. 93   **Mohamed Hanchi-''**Democracy Seeds"

The various forms of street art have become part of the visual culture gaining an international presence, with support from artist communities, books, magazines, films, and websites. Gallery owners, tourists, and the media have also become important vehicles for

disseminating Street-Urban art to a larger population. It is through these various media forms that people have been allowed more insight into street-urban art. This has encouraged a reflection of ourselves and the cities where we live. This poetry of our time illustrates the necessity of a cultural and political change in our everyday lives. Street-urban art messages are too loud to be ignored; they force citizens to lift their eyes and observe their surroundings. Even if some artists and their works have become highly commercialized and mainstream, street-urban art generally exemplifies a form of politcal resistance, acting as a major force of socio-politcal messages. In this regard, how does street art communicate socio-politically relevant themes to the public? How is this reflected in different cultures? What are the identifiable characteristics of street art that have led to its acceptance? How did it become appreciated by professional art critics?

My study has tried to answer these questions by exploring the history and progressive development of street art and by focusing on its place in society throughout the years. I investigated critical sources, reviews, analyses, and theories about this art form. In addition, I analyzed the artwork of street-urban stars, as well as that of lesser-known and anonymous artists. I also examined exhibitions, journals, texts, documentary films, videos, and research studies by street-urban art experts and scholars. I focused on the ways in which street-urban art has instigated public action and empowered people. Throughout the years, street-urban art has evolved from graffiti writing into a social and artistic movement blanketing the walls of cities around the world in its various forms. The art form continues to communicate messages in the public arena that are accessible to all. It acts as an instrument for advocacy and reflection on human existence. It remains a vital instrument of protest to bring about social change for communities of people who have no voice. While street-urban art has become mainstream and

commercialized in certain instances, it still offers a visual expression of protest that empowers those who cannot be no longer silenced. However brief it is, the shift of power is too great to be ignored. Just as graffiti writing was a visual symbol of hip hop in the 1980s, street art-urban is inextricably linked with a caring, sharing anti-capitalist rebelliousness. Just as street-urban art developed from graffiti, the art form itself is continually evolving. It represents a style that is anti-authoritarian, irreverent, irrepressible, wise, and ironic. It also acts as a voice for the powerless and the have-nots. Because of this, the art form has taken the world by storm.

While graffiti presented a more standardized language, tags in general, street-urban art tends to reflect the place in which it is installed and artists utilize their surroundings in creative ways. Street-urban art is representative of its creators' political opinions and creative desires, but also of the different opinions of the citizens in their urban canvases. Just as art in museums is a reflection of the cultures that produced it, street-urban art reveals the hidden narrative of those who make it and of those who view it. Street-urban artists attempt to question the existing environment with its own language.

In his 1985 book *Street Art*, Allan Schwartzman states that the work of street artists is meant to "communicate with everyday people about socially relevant themes in ways that are informed by esthetic values without being imprisoned by them". And because of the social, political, and economic influence of the artworks, messages are often effectively delivered and understood by people. From this perspective: Gleaton, Kristina. In her essay "Power to the People: Streets Arts in an Agency for Change "the accessibility of the art form contributes to its power" (16). Along these lines, Banksy adds: "street-urban art ultimately wins out because it becomes part of your city, it's a tool. A wall is a very big weapon; it's one of the nastiest things you can hit someone with" (Bansky) (**fig.94**).

Fig. 94   **Keizer**-"Respect Existence or Expect Resistance"

Street-urban art forms of communication are vital for a socio-urban regeneration process, because of their ability to link people together regardless of cultural, lingual, or racial differences in ways that few other things can. Furthermore, as seen in my comparison of Mexican and Italian Muralism, or Chicano Murals, street-urban art, because of its universal nature, can be recognized as a medium for mass communication.) It provides a voice for those who "otherwise could not comment upon or support current or perceived social problems." Chaffee mentions that the art form can "shape and move human emotions and gauge political sentiments" (4). Because "language and visual symbols help shape perception," the "clichés, slogans, and symbols-the substance of political rhetoric" that are communicated by street-urban art "help [to] mobilize [the] people" (4) Street-urban art, as a method of communication, is even more vital under

"repressive regimes where authoritarian systems attempt to reduce public space. The art form breaks the conspiracy of silence (4). Street-urban art shares with the press the important roles of forming social consciousness. In authoritarian systems where outlets for free expression are limited, it is one of the few gauges of political sentiment. In more open systems, street-urban art enables various entities to lobby for their interests.

Because it is immediate, quick, inexpensive, and often, street-urban art is a decentralized, democratic form with universal access. For this reason, it can be easily used to inform and educate. This mode of communication seeks to point out problems, question value systems, make claims, and suggest alternatives. Street-urban art serves as a tool for advocacy as well as a reporting forum. It functions socially as it helps to shed light on events, identify key players, provide social commentary, and even articulate political agendas and present visions. It plays a role that is often in direct opposition to the media, by offering its commentary, criticisms, and probing questions: "Partisan in nature, the art form is not obligated to remain neutral or unbiased, but instead works toward advancing a cause or idea" (Gleaton 18). Street-urban art is accessible to everyone regardless of point of view. By its very nature, it acts as an arena for expression and a sounding board of sorts for the marginalized. Whether the art form is sanctioned or unauthorized, it is exemplified by expressive thought that is directly communicated to its audience through the use of an economy of words and ideas and rhetorically simple discourse: "Street-urban artists rely on simple, concise messages and a fusing of thoughts, ideas and commentary to initiate a political dialogue. The ever-changing political sphere forces street-urban art to be highly adaptable; as issues arise, the art form's themes alter to reflect current problems"(Chaffee 9). As street-urban art breathes life into walls, a community dialogue is sparked when people begin to ask questions. Passersby, now forced to reflect on what they see,

become aware of the presence and viewpoint of an active underground resistance movement. Street-urban art, in direct opposition to commercial advertising, seeks to neutralize the themes and ideological discourse of the streets. This art form is a power tool for inspiring, energizing, generating morale, and raising the spirits of its public. People consume information, as it is available to them. Thus, street-urban art is utilized as a means of transmitting messages that help supplement the availability of information and ideas. This art form acts as a framing device for its communities around the world, as a "parallel voice of the city, and as a modern primitive art that can be found all around for those who wish to look (Lewisohn 30). One must assume that street art is an effective means of communication; if it were not, the general response to eradicate the art form, specifically from those power, would not be so great (**Fig.95**).

Fig.95   **Banksy**-"If Graffiti changed anything it would be illegal"

The landscape of the city itself also plays an important role, as it serves as the canvas and expressive outlet for communicating the street artists' messages. Cities act as both "physical and imagined spaces" where differences are constructed in, and themselves construct, city life and space: "A once gray wall, now seemingly alive through a multitude of color, speaks to the establishment a sense of belonging infused with symbolic meaning" (Gleaton 21) This illustrates the need to "be creative in the sense of remaking the world for ourselves as we make and find our place and identity" (Visconti et al. 521).

The urban landscape, as seen in Chapter 2, is in constant flux. The massive changes and transformation that continue to take place in our surroundings have been answered by politicized forms of street art. It allows citizens to become part of an urban mental process by providing text for understanding cities in transformation. Regular citizens start reading and interpreting street-urban art pieces not in a vacuum but in the context of a social commentary. This helps them become part of a living commentary and conversation about what is happening in a city. Because of its omnipresent nature, street-urban art has become a part of the cultural fabric of a city. It offers "a creative look to the city but also a voice against what the city has turned into. Street-urban art is a critical commentary on aspects of globalization and gentrification" (qtd. in Gleaton 30) . Urban artivists create a cultural space otherwise nonexistent within the urban environment, where their clandestine art form, which has become almost ubiquitous in people's urban lives.

The street-urban artists I analyzed in this study try to open people's minds and make them review their worldview. Street-art aims at using urban symbolism for reforming urban

mindscapes by providing new dimensions to urban space. What matters in this case is how people use these places for creating their collective urban plots. Their different mindscapes and imaginaries are indicators for understanding the physical reality of the urban experience. And this is where street-urban art "becomes the tool for making the invisible visible again and a community re-imaged and re-imagined" (Irving 3). Except for offering uses and functions, space also includes potential and choice: "The urban mindscape as another landscape, the one of the mind, consists of local and external images of the city which indicate something between the city as a physical entity and the visual perceptions people acquire about it" (Bianchini 13).

Urban imaginaries can be defined as symbolic, psychic indicators of unconscious desires and social constructions impacting on urban reality" (28). This shows that cities are not just big shopping malls or tourist money-making facilities, but places that are full of life and positive energy. By engaging with the city physically, street-urban artists and regular citizens who enjoy their art develop a special relationship with it.

A good example of this kind of interaction between public art and citizens is the Crown Fountain in Chicago, an interactive work of public art and video sculpture featured in Chicago's Millennium Park, designed by Catalan artist Jaume Plensa (**fig.96**). The fountain has survived its somewhat contentious beginnings to find its way into Chicago pop culture. It is a popular subject for photographers and a common gathering place. While some of the videos displayed are of scenery, most attention has focused on its video clips of local residents; hundreds of Chicagoans visit the fountain hoping to see themselves appearing on one of the fountain's two screens.

Fig. 96   **Jaume Plensa**-"Crown Fountain"

Street-urban artivists forge a very intimate negotiation with space by altering. Instead of playing the consumer role, their identity is forged on the walls of the city and in the interactive process with citizens. Street-urban art continues "to stimulate lively discussion about public space and its ties to the market, and rejuvenates public spaces while talking back to the culture of over-consumption" (Gleaton 39). Street artists spark an important dialogue through their street art regarding the search for common space and the democratization of art and our lives. They

strive to demonstrate that "while public space can be contested as private and commercialized by companies," it is the artists who offer public space "back as a collective good, where [a] sense of belonging and dialogue restore it to a meaningful place." (Gleaton 40) Street-urban art, as a form of aesthetic sabotage, interrupts the pleasant, efficient uniformity of planned urban space and predictable urban living. Street-urban artivists disrupt the lived experience of mass culture, the passivity of mediated consumption. While some argue that street-urban art is not something demanded by the public, street artists counter that "buildings, billboards, campaign ads, and flyers are also forced on the public. Artists claim that city landscapes "covered by ads and other commercial stimuli violate the spirit of the law by imposing the market ideology upon city dwellers" (Visconti et al. 515). Their work calls attention to this very injustice. Artists see city walls as public space that they have the right to reclaim, rearrange, and reuse.

In my view, street artists are "a public benefactor, "despite the illegal nature of their work, As a voice for engagement and activism, street-urban art creates dialogue and transactions between people, concerns, and their environments. It is at this level of participation that spectators are drawn in as active participants through which discourse is achieved. Action is instigated as a means to achieve some sort of social result: "Through street-urban art, connections among city inhabitants are established, and no longer is the passerby detached without a sense of belonging, navigating through their town without meaningful consumption" (Gleaton 55). This street democracy communicates the idea that there is a sense of duty imparted to citizens. In this way, street-urban artists create their own democratic setting and assume the right to consume public space through their own means and in their own terms. Redefining public space and urban landscapes, street artists contribute to the collective good through their call for participation from their audience. This participation becomes a form of political

resistance that, through the use of art, is able to elicit reflection and social action. It also helps create an urban mental process in which artists and the everyday person can individually or collectively produce visual common experiences that invite everyone's participation.

In the past twenty years, street art has evolved from simple graffiti writing into a social and artistic movement. Enveloping the world in its many forms, this art form has the power to communicate messages to the public that are accessible to all effectively. It acts as an instrument of protest and advocacy as well as a genuine reflection of the human existence. As illustrated by various sociopolitical movements (Occupy Movement, Indignados, Arab Spring, Taksim Square Movement-**fig.97**, EZLN) taking place in USA, Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Lybia, and Mexico, street-urban art provides a vital means of expression for subalterns, those who have no voice.

Fig. 97   **Anonymous Artist**-"I know the rules but the rules doesn't know me"

This art form will continue to evolve around the world as a powerful means of expression with the ability to instigate social change. Forcing us to pay attention, the graphic displays of artistic expression and subversion shout out to us to stop, look, and think about our environments and to actively assign meaning to what it is we see. Street-urban art transforming citizenss, as expressed by the Italian historian Giovanni Sartori, from a *homo sapiens* to *homo videns* condition. I consider it most direct example of cultural production. Pierre Bordieu describes the field of cultural production as framed by the relationship between two subfields, small-scale production and large-scale production that are distinguished by their degree of autonomy from the field of power. As opposed to large scale, small-scale production is characterized by a higher degree of autonomy. It is viewed as "production for producers" due to its rejection of the market. Street-urban art, in general, fits into the field of cultural production, as a form of small-scale production representing a post-postmodern genre being defined by real-time practice and interaction.

Street-urban artworks are "an intervention, a collaboration, a commentary, a dialogic critique, an individual or collective manifesto, an assertion of existence, aesthetic therapy for the dysaesthetics of urban controlled, commercialized visibility" (Irvine 3). Although they may be considered "an ephemeral, gratuitous acts of beauty or forms of counter-iconography," they still offer "the possibility to re-image our cities and to read-write intersection of the city as socio-political territories" (Irvine 3). Reading and re-writing our cities and our lives is becoming a continuous and global phenomenon, especially thanks to the Internet generations of artists who navigate "material and digital cities in an experiential continuum" (19). These artistic collaborations transform world cities, offering to regenerate, artistically and socially, urban public spaces: Recognition is both an internal code within the community of practice of street

artists, and the larger social effect sought by the works as acts in public, or publically viewable, space: "The acts of visibility, separable from the anonymity of many streets artists, become part of the social symbolic world, and finally, of urban ritual, repetitions that instantiate communal beliefs and bonds of identity" (Irvine 20).

To conclude, I would like to answer the questions proposed by JR, in his TED Prize speech: "Can art change the world? Maybe…we should change the question: Can art change people's lives?"[1]: in both cases YES!

Fig. 98   **VHILS-**"Now is our time."

End Notes

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[1] Artivism is a portmanteau word combining "art" and "activism". Artivism developed in recent years while the antiwar and anti-globalization protests emerged and proliferated. In most of the cases artivists attempt to push political agendas by the means of art, but the focus on raising social, environmental and technical awareness, has increased exponentially as people has started to lose faith in politics and the current socioeconomic system. Besides using traditional mediums like film and music to raise awareness or push for change, an artivist can also be involved in culture jamming, subvertising, street art, spoken word, protesting and activism.

[2] Most of us tend to identify with multiple places and sustain multiple levels of loyalty to them, which are sometimes overlapping and sometimes conflicting. We are simultaneously citizens of a locality, a state or province, a country, and the planet we all share. In this sense, we are all "glocal" citizens.

[3] The urban mindscape as another landscape, the one of the mind, consists of local and external images of the city which indicate something between the city as a physical entity and the visual perceptions people acquire about it (Bianchini 2006).

[4] The concept of liminality was first developed in the early 20th century by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and later taken up by Victor Turner. More recently, usage of the term has broadened to describe political and cultural change as well as rituals. During liminal periods of all kinds, social hierarchies may be reversed or temporarily dissolved, continuity of tradition may become uncertain, and future outcomes once taken for granted may be thrown into doubt. The dissolution of order during liminality creates a fluid, malleable situation that enables new institutions and customs to become established.

[5] *Flâneur* comes from the French masculine noun *flâneur*—which has the basic meanings of "stroller", "lounger", "saunterer", "loafer"—which itself comes from the French verb *flâner*, which means "to stroll". Charles Baudelaire developed a derived meaning of *flâneur*—that of "a person who walks the city in order to experience it". Because of the term's usage and theorization by Baudelaire and numerous thinkers in economic, cultural, literary and historical fields, the idea of the flâneur has accumulated significant meaning as a referent for understanding urban phenomena and modernity.

[6] Social geography is the branch of human geography that is most closely related to social theory in general and sociology in particular, dealing with the relation of social phenomena and its spatial components.

[7] I use the idea of cultural catalyzer as something that initiates or causes an important social event to happen. Originally the term was used in chemistry for the volatile (active) chemical in a formula.

[8] The concept of Netnographic, information on the symbolism, meanings, and consumption patterns of online communities, comes from the reading of *Netnografía. Investigación, análisis e intervención social.* Del Fresno, Miguel. Editorial UOC, Barcelona, España. 2011.

[9] *Excursus* is a detailed discussion of a particular point in a book, usually in an appendix. It comes from early Latin, *excurrere*: to run out. In *oxforddictionaries.com* (October 2013).

[10] I assume the notions of *non-place* and its relationship to contemporary place, considering Marc Auge's ideas. I analyze it into the process of new forms of modernity, its co-existence with global capitalist modernity, and its transformation of western cultural form. I connect this idea to the notion in light of Castells *spaces of flow* to understand a new type of (no) social-spaces that allow distant synchronous, real-time interaction.

[11] Each city has a unique spirit of place, or a distinctive atmosphere, that goes beyond the built environment. This urban context reflects how a city functions in real time as people move through time and space. This context of a city is more formally known as *genius loci*, or the genetic footprint of a place. Latin for the genius of the place, this phrase refers to classical Roman concept of the protective spirit of a place. In contemporary usage, *genius loci*,

usually refers to a location's distinctive atmosphere, or the afore-mentioned spirit of place, rather than a guardian spirit.

[12] Interview in Kevin Charles Redmon, "Shepard Fairey's American Graffiti, The Future of the City," The Atlantic. http://www.theatlantic.com/special-report/the-future-of-thecity/archive/2010/05/shepard-faireys-american graffiti/56924/. (May 2010).

[13] The Ἀγορά, the marketplace and civic center, was one of the most important parts of an ancient city of Athens. In addition to being a place where people gathered to buy and sell all kinds of commodities, it was also a place where people assembled to discuss all kinds of topics: business, politics, current events, or the nature of the universe and the divine.

[14] Milieu, refers to the immediate physical and social setting in which people live or in which something happens or develops. It includes the culture that the individual was educated or lives in, and the people and institutions with whom they interact.

[16] http://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/blog/2011/05/24/somerville-street-art (May 2012).

[17] Two of the most important publication are the following:
      1.1. Folgarait, Leonard. Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: art of the new order. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
      1.2. Charlot, Jean. Mexican Mural Renaissance, 1920-25.Yale University Press, 1963.

[18] Los Tres Grandes is a collaborative mural that pays tribute to the great Mexican muralists David Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and José Orozco. The mural is located on the back of Barrio Café on 16th St, part of the Calle 16 Mural Project. Artists involved inlcude Francisco "Enuf" Garcia, Sinek, Joseph "Sentrock" Perez, Angel Diaz, Srvnt, Averian Chee, Jeff Slim, Ser V One, Pruf, Keisr, Martin Moreno, Armando, Durok, and Detor. www.phxtaco.com

[19] ://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6c/Rivera_Mural_Palacio_Nacional_Indian_Mexico.JPG mla

[20] (…the artistic phenomenon of Mexican muralism is manifested in the ambit of the social, the political and the cultural and it is there where it influence and renew…-my translation).

[21] José Vasconcelos Calderón (28 February 1882 – 30 June 1959) was a Mexican writer, philosopher and politician. He is one of the most influential and controversial personalities in the development of modern Mexico. His philosophy of the "*cosmic race*" affected all aspects of Mexican sociocultural, political, and economic policies.

[22] Giuseppe Bottai was one of the leading Fascist intellectuals. Becoming Italy's Minister of Education between 1936 and 1943, and founding the *Critica fascista*, the most important magazine of that period, he highly influenced the Italian culture life.

[23] Il Manifesto Futurista was published by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in the Italian newspaper Gazzetta dell'Emilia in Bologna on 5 February 1909.

[24] Fiat ars, pereat mundus, fascism says and anticipates from the modern state, artistic satisfaction of sensorial perception modified by technology.. This is the political stridentism that fascism proposes. Communism answers with a politicization of the arts."-my Translation).

[25] Metahistory is concerned with the nature of history, the meaning of history and the cause and significance of historical change. In my perspective the historian himself is primarily engaged in the study of the past. He does not ask himself why the past is different from the present or what is the meaning of history as a whole. What he wants to know is what actually happened at a particular time and place and what effect it had on the immediate future.

[26] ("The Privilege of Sight" public art does not stop being national art and dynastic, the will of the state and church; it was and is a testimony of the unanimity imposed by orthodox religion and politics "(55)- my Translation).

[27] ("The revolutionary period within 1910-1955 understood the revolution primarily as armed battle and as a form of government secondarily as a central figure. One of the goals that should be faced from 1917, the era which began its consolidation, was to find the appropriate means to disseminate their content within a population in which illiteracy was the norm"- my Translation).

[28] (The painted Mexican mural "was the historical painting/ art of the 20th century in Mexico. And is to a certain point is the conservator, in the work of the muralist there is seen an intent that is strictly pedagogical, propagandistic and in its sum eminently public-my Translation).

[29] *Il Manifesto della Pittura Murale* was published by Mario Sironi in the Italian newspaper La Colonna on 5 February 1909 and was signed also by the Italian artists Campigli, Carrà e Funi. Pg. 23.

[30] Los Tres Grandes is a collaborative mural that pays tribute to the great Mexican muralists David Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and Jose Orozco. The mural is located on the back of Barrio Cafe on 16th St, part of the Calle 16 Mural Project. Artists involved include Francisco "Enuf" Garcia, Sinek, Joseph "Sentrock" Perez, Angel Diaz, Srvnt, Averian Chee, Jeff Slim, Ser V One, Pruf, Keisr, Martin Moreno, Armando, Durok, and Detor. (www.phxtaco.com).

[31] ("…with its base placed in plastic values, a symbolic order administrated by the State." –my Translation).

[32] The centrality of this symbolic correspondence between body and state is relevant in almost all representations of the human body in fascist art.

[33] Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (May 21, 1895 – October 19, 1970) was President of Mexico from 1934 to 1940.

[34] My connection is between the new Mexican National State and its Constitution, the first thing that was done to finish pacifying Mexico, and the State that when he wrote *The Leviathan*.

[35] Caló is an argot or slang of Mexican Spanish which originated during the first half of the 20th century in the Southwestern United States. It is the product of zoot-suit pachuco culture as explained by Dagoberto Fuentes and José A. López in *Barrio language dictionary: first dictionary of* Caló.La Puente, California: El Barrio Publications, 1974. Print. Pg. 12.

[36] Pachuco is also known as Caló as explained by Ortega, Adolfo in *Caló Orbis: semiotic aspects of a Chicano language variety*. New York: P.Lang Edition. 1991. Print. Pg. 12-15.

[37] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer spoke about this concept in the chapter "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", of the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), wherein they proposed that popular culture use to manipulate mass society into passivity. They especially perceived mass-produced culture as dangerous to the more technically and intellectually difficult high arts that are more useful to promote a socio-political critical capacity.

[38] The ancestral home and nation of the Aztec people and their descendants (www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=aztlan). (December 2012).

[39] Hitting up" (la placa) or "striking out: is the most important graffiti for Chicano gangs. La placa is a simple writing of the gang name and the name of the artist and a few of his close friends. This goes back to the idea of protection in the sense that this group of names can be interpreted as a family and they all will do whatever is necessary to protect each other (http://chicano-graffiti.wikispaces.com).

[40] Carlos Callejo is an active witness of the Chicano muralist movement and a link between tradition and future in Chicano Art.

[41] I created this concept in order to underline the possible passage, through art-especially street-urban art, from a social exclusion, represented by the *ghetto*, to a sense of community or *get together.* Street-urban art is a powerful

tool that stimulates imagination, helps to dream and to have a wider worldview , thus creating a collective sense of belonging.

[42] The exhibition showed as the artists used their work to map another L.A.—as part of a social protest and community empowerment movement presenting little-seen work and archival documentation that reveal a complex history of how artists both navigated and imagined the social spaces of Los Angeles. http://www.fowler.ucla.edu/exhibitions/mapping-another-la-chicano-art-movement (October 2012).

[43] I am thinking about those publications:
   1.1. Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin
        Books, Ltd., 1975. Reprint, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995.
   1.2. Davis, Mike. *Urban Graffiti:Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space." In The Politics of Urban America: A Reader*. Ed. Dennis R. Judd and Paul P. Kantor. Print.
   1.3. Stephens, Sarah. *Fun with Vandalism: The Illegal Street Art of Shepard Fairey and Banksy*. University of Cincinnati. 2006. Print.

[44] http://www.nuriamora.com/

[45] http://www.hitotzuki.com/sasu/cv_e.html

[46] http://swooninprint.com/

[47]http://www.fatcap.com/artist/klor.html

[48] http://fafi.net/

[49] http://acbfund.blogspot.com/

[50] http://www.at149st.com/eva62.html

[51] http://www.at149st.com/eva62.html

[52] http://www.at149st.com/eva62.html

[53] http://www.artcrimes.com/zori4/index.html

[54] http://fafi.net/

[55] http://cargocollective.com/koralie

[56] http://www.missy-elliott.com/

[57] http://www.sarariel.com/

[58] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claw_Money

[59] http://www.tooflynyc.com/

[60] http://www.ladyaiko.com/

[61] http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/brenda-nokuzola-fassie

[62] http://www.sbf.org.za/Main_Site/index.php

[63] http://www.madagascarinstitute.com/

[64] http://www.toyshopcollective.org/

[65] http://theinfluencers.org/black-label-bike-club

[66] http://justseeds.org/blog/

[67] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glowlab

[68] http://missrockaway.org/

[69] http://www.deitch.com/

[70] http://theequalityeffect.org/

[71] http://woodhullandwatson.weebly.com/tennessee-watson.html

[72] http://www.honey-space.com/

[73] http://nuestrashijasderegresoacasa.blogspot.com/

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