

Glocal Street Art. Places, Identities, Narratives

Workshop | International Symposium | Meetings



Fiole, Rennes (FR) 2021 | Photograph : Edwige Comoy Fusaro

Call for papers

Unauthorized works of art in the public space are often ephemeral and changing. The transience of such works is primarily the consequence of their underground nature, exposing them to be torn apart or removed by the legal owners of the space. The transient character of this art is also related to its exposure to passers-by and to harsh weather conditions, causing peeling and fading. While most works are created for a given location and can then be considered site-specific, their photographic images—spread widely on the Internet or social media by artists and aficionados—are off-site. This phenomenon has benefited from fast-developing virtual data storage (blogs, websites and social media) and the continuing evolution of camera technology in smartphones. It is certainly reinforced by the drive for conservation and the sense of heritage which both characterize contemporaneity, as Jean Michel Tobelem claimed when he noted that the growth of museums is a “major trait of our times”. Yet, the pictures of the works are not the works and that is even truer in the case of street art, which is characterized by its transient, fragile nature. The way pictures of street art are stored in new virtual museums is thus problematic. The simple act of framing a work which is essentially site specific, made for (and by) the street, limits its performative dimension and hinders the sensory experience of the user. The paradox lies in this duality: the photographs of the works are shared on a global scale whereas the art itself has a strictly local existence. Street art seems to have multiple conditions of existence and visibility: virtual and concrete, global and local, ephemeral (in its real location) and durable (online). This duality gives street art its unique character. Characterized by such multiplicity, street art has created what Maxime Szczepanski calls “a type of site-specific space best referred to as ‘glocal’ as it combines local and global aspects”.

Indeed, the situation of street art also raises questions. The term ‘street art’ is still being debated, whether in relation to other genres such as graffiti and urban art, or for the questioning of its urban location as some pieces can be found in the countryside. Some works are repeated so as to create series (stencils, stickers or other media meant to be reproduced) or are conceived for exportation to another site or for

virtual promotion. The use made in street art of a universal, verbal or iconic language and the predominance of English testify to a global intent. Accordingly, stories about street artists rising to fame generally describe a career path in two parts: first, the detailed exploration of their hometowns and then, the extension of their work to capital cities around the world. Success for street artists is generally associated with the relocation and/or globalization of their art, applied to large urban centers that are extremely varied in terms of culture and topography. Uncensored art in the street thus primarily questions the relation to space, the place it is attached to and the sites where it is seen. Does its meaning change according to its conditions of visibility? What stories do these new forms of contemporary art tell? Can cultural identities develop at spatial crossroads of diverse dimensions? Can a piece of street art be relocated, exported or reproduced to another site without altering its significance?

The University of Rennes 2 will hold an international symposium intended to explore these issues on February 24, 25 and 26, 2022. A special session for young scholars will take place on February 24. We invite proposals for paper presentations in English or French (duration: 20 minutes).

Executive Committee

Edwige Comoy Fusaro, Université Rennes 2, CELLAM

Hélène Gaillard, Université de Bourgogne, TIL

Juliette Le Gall, Université Rennes 2, CELLAM

Save the Dates!

By April 25, 2021: submit an abstract in English or French (1000-1500 signs) either for the special session for young scholars or for the symposium, a short profile and key words (5 maximum).

By January 28, 2022: submit a written summary of your presentation in English or French (2000-3000 signs)

February 24, 2022: session for young scholars, Université Rennes 2

February 25-26, 2022: international symposium, Université Rennes 2

By March 25, 2022: submit your written paper in English or French (30.000-50.000 signs)

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