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## **STREET ART: BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND DISPERSION. A GLOBAL COLLECTIVE OF INDIVIDUALITIES**

**Abstract:** Today, street art is a global phenomenon, gathering artists from all over the world and appearing in almost every corner of the globe – diverse but recognizable. It is a return to art and, at the same time, going beyond art – it distracts, unites and uses all technical, stylistic and organizational possibilities. It is the largest conglomerate of individualities, but it is also full of repetitions, compilations and imitations. It creates micro-narratives also often refers to great historical narratives. It reluctantly submits to theories and definitions, does not mark any boundaries, and does not set any conditions. Although street art is popular and understandable, and remains on the margin of the Art World, it is a barometer of the latest social, political and cultural phenomena. Street art is worth observing in order to keep abreast of the most important discourses and sometimes even to be a step ahead.

**Keywords:** Street art, graffiti, globalisation

Street art is undoubtedly a global artistic phenomenon undergoing constant transformation. Its diversity and vast scope make it difficult to define and classify it.<sup>1</sup> It is neither a trend nor a style, let alone a genre. Its boundaries have not been determined, more and more artists emerge, and even careful observers cannot name or recognize all of its active creators. Although usually associated with murals, stickers and stencils created in public spaces, it keeps generating

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<sup>1</sup> Por. A. Gralińska-Toborek, *Graffiti i street art. Słowo, obraz, działanie*. Łódź 2019, pp. 19-49.

new techniques and strategies. It works in parallel in the city and in virtual spaces. Even though it can be illegal, street art has been institutionalized to a large extent and, despite being ephemeral, it undergoes museumization, and discussions of its protection and conservation appear more and more often.<sup>2</sup> The dichotomies listed here (and there exist many more) do not, however, constitute features that are qualifying or characteristic for street art, but rather set the boundaries **between which** it is situated. Therefore, it has been proposed for a long time now to abandon these kinds of defining terms in favour of the 'post-dichotomous' approach. It makes it possible for attitudes to mediate and interpenetrate, for opposites to combine, and for fluidity and volatility to be preserved, which, consequently, facilitates expanding the field of activity and interest of a larger number of recipients. Integration and dispersion constitute one such discrepancy that frames street art artists' action space – it is defined by such phenomena as globalization, a sense of community, references to tradition and great narratives, and cooperation on one hand, and autonomy, individualization, locality, micro-stories and anonymity on the other. Let us have a look, then, at how street art is spread between these poles.

### **Which came first: integration or dispersion?**

This question resembles the most popular dilemma of which came first, the chicken or the egg. To integrate means to assemble something separate, but in order to disperse, one must first have a divisible whole. Historically speaking, culture, including art, has created certain continuity since ancient times. It consisted in referring back to predecessors, following the example of the best and evoking authorities. Changes, whether stylistic, formal, or content-based, also took place in an evolutionary way. The whole would widen or be impoverished without, however, disturbing its center, and its permanence was guarded by tradition that fulfilled functions classified as epistemic (ones that created a belief system), normative (indicated the rules), legitimizing (justified the doctrines) and phatic (allowed one to identify with a group).<sup>3</sup> In fact, the entirety of the culture of a given region (continent, land) or nation consisted of

<sup>2</sup> The term "postdichotomous life" appears in the description of the graffiti community activities in the article: M. Sliwa, G. Cairns, *Exploring Narratives and Antenarratives of Graffiti Artists: Beyond Dichotomies of Commitment and Detachment*, "Culture and Organization" 2007, vol. 13(1), p. 74. See also: A. Gralińska-Toborek, W. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, *Experience of Art in Urban Space. Urban Forms Gallery 2011-2013*, Łódź 2014, p.13.

<sup>3</sup> P. Łukowski, B. Żukowski, *Istota zjawiska tradycji – podejście strukturalno-logiczne*, in: *Nowe czytanie tradycji. Z inspiracji Rokiem Kolbergowskim*, ed. E. Nowina-Sroczyńska, S. Latocha, Instytut Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej UŁ, Łódź 2016, pp. 53-66.

multiple, overlapping, complementary, or even competing traditions. Tensions that may have occurred between them would also result in a certain balance. The whole, consisting of integrated elements, also constituted a condition of the highest aesthetic value – beauty. Thus, the distinctiveness of individual creators of culture was subordinated to the whole. In short, it can be said that integration was the very first feature of European culture.

Was the avant-garde revolution that rejected the tradition of art a dispersion? Only partially. Despite being based on denial, often ridicule, and breakdown of tradition patterns of the previous culture, it could not have effectively awakened it, had it not been fully aware of what the latter represented. The avant-garde did not disperse, break up or destroy traditional culture but only removed it entirely into the past. On the other hand, the avant-garde began to build a new kind of art, heterogenous in its varieties, multi-directional and multi-shaped. The variety of trends, goals, means of artistic expression and, above all, theories, may indicate incoherence and a lack of a unifying force. And yet, what united the Great Avant-garde was precisely the dream of creating a completely new, decentralized culture that would transcend all boundaries. Borders define a certain entity and the Avant-garde was supposed to be open, boundless art. As a result, however, the absence of rules became the main rule. Theorists were still looking for a common denominator of the avant-garde, listing many of its characteristic features, the most important and unifying of which was novelty.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it was art directed towards the future, designing what did not yet exist, as opposed to imitating what was and still is. Roger Scruton calls avant-garde a "guest from the future" who reminds us of constant change that, paradoxically, constitutes the only constant thing in human nature.<sup>6</sup> No wonder then that the word 'development' has gained such significance in criticism and theory of art, signifying constant hunger and striving towards something undefined. Not the goal, but the path, has become the most important element of the modernist narrative which Rosalind Krauss metaphorically called a series of adjoining rooms:

"The history we saw from Manet to the Impressionists to Cézanne and then to Picasso was like a series of rooms *en filade*. Within each room the individual artist explored, to the limits of his experience and his formal

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<sup>4</sup> For, as Heraclitus argued, *What is divergent, unites; from different [sounds] arises the most beautiful harmony and everything arises thanks to friction*. Quoted from: W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki*, vol. 1, *Estetyka starożytna*, PWN, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> See: R. Kluszczyński, *Awangarda. Rozważania teoretyczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 1997, pp. 9-19.

<sup>6</sup> R. Scruton, *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press New York, p. 141.

intelligence, the separate constituents of his medium. The effect of his pictorial act was to open simultaneously the door to the next space and close out access to the one behind him. The shape and dimensions of the new space were discovered by the next pictorial act; the only thing about that unstable position that was clearly determined beforehand was its point of entrance.”<sup>7</sup>

An avant-garde artist was thus determined by the past – that is, by the very "point of entrance", insofar as he or she could not turn back and had to move forward in a direction that was not known to anyone. Because it was obligatory for everyone, it became a principle that was integrating and dispersing at the same time. It integrated by imposing the sole pursuit of something and dispersed by indicating that everyone must find a separate path (although such paths were often followed by groups). As a result, both avant-garde and post-war neo-avant-garde art have become an open collection of works so different that they still confuse many connoisseurs who look for their explanation and justification. The heterogeneous, montage-based form that denies the organic nature of traditional artwork, as Peter Bürger wrote so clearly,<sup>8</sup> did not allow them to be included in a whole and systematized. Thus, the dichotomy of dispersion and integration was already present in modernist times, and I would attribute the dispersion to the creative activities themselves and integration to the universalizing attempts of their interpreters.

Postmodern philosophy and art, which probably grew out of the inability to further justify this diversity, seemed to reconcile with this state of affairs – it accepted and emphasized the difference, fragmentation, pluralism, deconstruction and, finally, repetition. The dispersion was no longer just a means to an end – it has become an end.

Going back to eponymous street art, one can ask under what circumstances it has emerged and what constituted its "point of entrance" – integration or dispersion? It seems that the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was a time of getting used to pluralism and disintegration. At the same time, progressing globalization manifested itself, among others, in mobility, rapid circulation of information and ease of communication at a distance. This started the process of cultural exchange and, at the same time, cultural homogenization. Street art is a result of this state of affairs but also an opening to new possibilities at the time of an art crisis. Demanding innovation from art

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<sup>7</sup> R. Krauss, *A view of Modernism*, "Art Forum, New York", vol. 11, no. 1, September 1972, online: <https://www.artforum.com/print/197207/a-view-of-modernism-37492> (accessed: 15.07.2022).

<sup>8</sup> P. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis 1984, pp. 73-82.

has become the cause of its exhaustion – there are no longer any limits that could be exceeded. Repetition, quotation, irony and all intertextual games have become an attempt to escape this impasse – conscious distancing from modernism. Street art, however, arose on the margins of art as a result of subcultural expression (in the form of graffiti) or youthful insubordination.<sup>9</sup>

### Street art and art institutions

The dispersion of art from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is evidenced by a variety of artistic practices resulting from the transcending of genres, *melting* art into life, searching for new techniques and strategies, and reaching for modern media. The glue connecting this artistic panopticon was an art institution: the Art World. Both performance and installation, ready-made, land art and video art end up in galleries and museums (even as documentation), and texts written by critics about them serve as means of their legitimation. In this context, when art could be anything, as long as it was accepted by the Art World,<sup>10</sup> spontaneous creativity, which did not seek to enter salons (nor did it want to be referred to as art), began to develop entirely outside of it. Since the late 1970s, graffiti began to expand within public spaces and other forms appeared almost at the same time – stencils, stickers and interventions.<sup>11</sup> Currently, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, street art, including graffiti, is invariably associated with the big city. Cities promote themselves with the use of murals and smaller forms of art, festival-organizing entities get established, and artists leave their works on the streets around the world. For them, museums are not the most important spaces for art – they appeal to the public without the mediation of curators and critics. At the same time, they can count on very wide reception of their art – also among people who do not usually visit museums and galleries. Moreover, they do not need institutional confirmation of their artistic quality, as they gain credibility right on the streets.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we are dealing with a breakdown of the world of art, with the creation of a second "circuit", with decentralization and "de-professionalization" of art.

<sup>9</sup> Cedar Lewisohn mentions situationism, pop art and punk as the main sources of street art. C. Lewisohn, *Street art. The graffiti revolution*, Tate London, 2008, pp. 75-76.

<sup>10</sup> See: T. Adajian, *The Definition of Art*, in: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/art-definition/> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>11</sup> Initially, these were subcultural practices, creating their own alternative world of expression, but after some time (in the 1980s) they aroused the interest of official art institutions. See: L. A. Powers, *Whatever Happened to the Graffiti Art Movement?*, "Journal of Popular Culture" 1996, vol. 29; A. Rose, untitled, in: *Beautiful Losers. Contemporary Art and Street Culture* [exh. cat.], Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, Łódź 2007, pp. 141-142; A. Gralińska-Toborek, *Graffiti and Street Art...* pp. 26-32.

<sup>12</sup> See: A. Gralińska-Toborek, "All my city in graffiti" – czyli bombardowanie przestrzeni miejskiej, in: *Czas przestrzeni*, red. K. Wilkoszewska, Universitas, Kraków 2008, pp. 45-46.

On the other side of the coin is the phenomenon of institutionalization of this trend, which gets strongly criticized by artists and fans of illegal street art. In their opinion, festivals, public procurement, city projects, exhibitions in museums and galleries, and, ultimately, an increasingly high position on the art market lead to a shift in the nature of street art as they blunt its critical and social edge, and deprive it of autonomy.<sup>13</sup> Although institutions try to subordinate, neutralize and thus integrate street art, it is not an easy task.<sup>14</sup> Artists play with institutions, sometimes overtly ridiculing them, like Banksy's destroying his masterpiece right after it was outbid at an auction in Sotheby's, and sometimes simply earning money for further illegal activities.<sup>15</sup> There exist fewer and fewer extreme attitudes adhering to the rules of illegality and subversiveness as the highest values of this art, which is a manifestation of the aforementioned "postdichotomous style of life".

### Grand narratives and micronarratives

The collapse of great narratives announced by Jean-François Lyotard was to be one of the most important symptoms of postmodernism.<sup>16</sup> Their integrating power was evident in modernist tales of the avant-garde. Traces of great narratives can also still be found in discussions regarding street art. In the article "Of Materiality and Meaning: The Illegality Condition in Street Art", Tony Chackal defends illegality as a "paradigmatic feature" and "historical norm of street art".<sup>17</sup> The authors of the book *Trespass. A History of Uncommissioned Urban Art*, Marc and Sara Schiller, claim that publicly funded art "is often a result of watered compromises, eats away at the street artist's soul".<sup>18</sup> This essentialist approach to street art puts its representatives in a defensive position

<sup>13</sup> In May 2016, Blu, one of the most important street art artists, in an act of protest against the exhibition *Street Art - Banksy & Co.: Art in the Urban Form in Bologna*, painted over his murals in the city. The magazine „Ocula” devoted an entire issue to this problem, entitled: „Street art: iconoclastia e istituzionalizzazione, Ocula”, vol. 18, Sempتمبر 2017, doi: 10.12977/OCULA81

<sup>14</sup> See: P. Costa, R. Lopes, *Is street art institutionalizable? Challenges to an alternative urban policy in Lisbon*, „Metropolises” vol. 17, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.4000/metropolises.5157> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>15</sup> See: A. Gralińska-Toborek, *Graffiti i street art - od „teorii rozbitych szyb” do aukcji w domu Sotheby's*, in: *Granice tolerancji w sztuce i wychowaniu*, ed. M. Zalewska-Pawlak, A. Sieczyńska-Kukawska, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2020, pp. 63-70 .

<sup>16</sup> J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> T. Chackal, *Of Materiality and Meaning: The Illegality Condition in Street Art*, „The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism” 74:4, fall 2016, pp. 359-369.

<sup>18</sup> M. and S. Schiller, *Preface* in: *Trespass...* op. cit., p. 11.

against changes appearing in this form of art. Also, other features mentioned in this narrative, such as autonomy, ephemerality and anonymity, are no longer necessary. Collaboration with institutions, commercialization and transferring to the Internet are the phenomena that disintegrate this radical model. Thus, dispersion causes more and more difficulties in creating definitions or theories of street art.

The problem of narrative in street art is not limited to theoretical matters – storytelling is a common strategy in artistic practice. Following the times of autotelicity and autonomy of neo-avant-garde art, street art often returns to what is mimetic, illustrative and literary. I have written a lot on this topic elsewhere, and here I would only like to indicate how stories undertaken by artists are placed in between integration and dispersion.<sup>19</sup> The term "great narratives", attributed primarily to universalizing, historical, identity-defining and religious stories, possesses, as Lyotard claims, its proper functors: a great hero, great dangers, great voyages and a great goal.<sup>20</sup> Undoubtedly, public space is an arena where such stories collide, not only under the traditional form of monuments and memorials, but also as mural paintings that are utilized to excess today.<sup>21</sup> Murals have become an easy, relatively cheap and quick-to-implement way of commemorating events and people – hence commissions, orders, competitions and thematic projects announced and funded by institutions, certain social groups and other entities. They tend to arouse controversy among theoreticians and lovers of street art to such an extent that they are often not considered as belonging to this art movement at all.<sup>22</sup> Contextuality, political and ideological entanglement, temporariness, arbitrariness and persuasiveness are the main charges that can be raised against this art form, and they all relate primarily to great narratives represented by murals, regardless of whether they were commissioned or spontaneous. This type of art can be easily manipulated and often becomes a tool of political struggle or propaganda – the example of which can be murals in Dublin<sup>23</sup> or murals in Crimea created after 2014, portraying Vladimir Putin and signed with the tag # наш [# our].

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<sup>19</sup> I discuss this problem in the third chapter of my book: *Graffiti i street art.*, op. cit., pp. 103-146.

<sup>20</sup> J.-F. Lyotard, op. cit., p. XXIV.

<sup>21</sup> I. Upalewski, *Murals make (our) history: paintings on the wall as media of cultural memory. Interpreting the current state of Warsaw's commemorative murals*, "Qualitative Sociology Review", vol. 3, no. (4), 2017, pp. 114-135; A. Krzywik, *Murals as Memory Carriers. Analysis of the Meanings Given to Them and the Attitudes of Their Creators*, "On the W@terfront. Public Art. Urban Design. Civic Participation. Urban Regeneration", vol. 63, no. 11 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1344/waterfront2021.63.11.03> (accessed: 15.07.2022).

<sup>22</sup> See: J. Abarca, *From street art to murals: what have we lost?*, "SAUC - Street Art and Urban Creativity", 2(2), pp. 61-67. <https://doi.org/10.25765/sauc.v2i2.55> (accessed: 15.07.2022).

<sup>23</sup> J. McCormick, N. Jerman, *Death of Mural*, "Journal of Material Culture" 2005, vol. 10, pp. 49-71.

At the same time, we can find numerous local, personal and fantastic stories in realizations of street art. Many artists tell such stories in their subsequent series of artworks. It is characteristic, however, that individual paintings are scattered all over the world and do not constitute a linear plot, but rather remind us of their common origin with the use of certain motives. It is not rare for figures, such as main characters or other elements of these paintings, to become artists' hallmarks, as in the oeuvres of D\*Face or the Herakut duo (Jasmin Siddiqui and Falk Lehmann). They do not illustrate specific stories, but rather appear ad hoc, requiring the viewer to tell his or her own story – they do not suggest veracity, but rather reveal their own fictional character. The dispersion of the works of an artist in different places does not, however, prevent the viewer from being able to fully judge the artist's oeuvre. In such cases, the Internet plays a connecting role. Photographs of artworks can be viewed online on artists' websites, social media and numerous street art portals – it is enough to input the artist's pseudonym into a search engine. Of course, what we are dealing with here is indirect reception, a substitute for a real encounter with art. However, in terms of content, it is sufficient, as it allows one to recognize a given narrative and identify it with a specific creator (though not necessarily with a given place).

### **Globality and localness**

In this way, we come to another determinant of the eponymous dichotomy – namely, the issue of place. Graffiti originally emerged in New York, but when it spread in Europe, it looked very similar. It thus constitutes global art because it can be encountered in many parts of the world, but has no local varieties (apart from the characteristic Brazilian *pichaço*) and looks the same everywhere. It was not, however, caused by the mobility of graffiti artists, but rather by their following of American graffiti examples. Street art, on the other hand, is a global phenomenon because artists travel a lot and their works are known thanks to the Internet. In artists' portfolios, we usually see the word "based" instead of nationality, which means that the place (usually a large city) mentioned by the artist is only a location, a place of residence, and not a sphere of creativity and identity building. Of course, many creators do use ethnic, national and local motifs as hallmarks and inspiration for their works – for example, Add Fuel (Diogo Machado) uses motifs from the Portuguese azulejo, while Inti (Inti Castro) refers to the Inca mythology. The latter creates large-format paintings depicting the figure of a fictional wanderer equipped with different attributes related to the cults of various religions, which are so enigmatic or even hermetic that when transplanted into European soil, they are difficult to read and understand. This "global syncretism", modeled on syncretism that has



existed for 500 years in South America, is intended to be a new cultural proposition for the world.<sup>24</sup> It is not, however, a universalism that presupposes the primacy of one culture, but a mix of cultures that were decontextualized before being brought together.<sup>25</sup>

Artists who have developed their own recognizable style and, frequently, their own iconography, very often create works in public spaces, in different places around the world, regardless of local contexts. Often transplanted into other cultures, they constitute messages concerning the artist himself or herself, and a trace of their actions – they are a form of self-advertisement. There are many artists who come with a ready-made project and implement it in a place designated, for example, by festival organizers. However, there are also those who devote a lot of time to the implementation of a project, living in a given community, learning about its problems and adapting the work to local needs. The projects of JR, El Seed and Guido van Helten are examples of works that were created as a result of the participation process, have specific social goals and use globalization to raise awareness of local problems. It happens that artists, such as the already mentioned JR or Vhils (Alexandre Manuel Dias Farto), use portraits of residents or images of people important to a given community in their works, as is the case with social murals. There is also a local dimension to works referring to the history of a given place, or ones created in particular places, such as the West Bank Wall (between Israel and Palestine), house walls in Cairo during the Egyptian spring in 2011, or refugee camps.

### **The collective individuality**

Collectivism in the times of the avant-garde was considered an important development factor. For many artists, especially constructivists, collective artistic activity was associated with an ambitious plan to rebuild society according to its own formula.<sup>26</sup> Common work, be it of futurists, surrealists, Dadaists or constructivists, served, as Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette note: "to blur the boundaries between subjects and subjectivities, to diminish the sense of who did what and who was what in order to call forth, as the honored subject of history, some synergy greater than the sum of its constituent parts. It was this synergy that was the agent of modernization generally."<sup>27</sup> On the other hand,

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<sup>24</sup> I. Castro, P. Aravena, *Inti*, Albin Mitchel Editions 2017, pp. 13-15.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> B. Stimson, G. Sholette, *Introduction*, in: *Collectivist after modernism. The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, B. Stimson, G. Sholette (eds), University Of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis London 2007, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

for post-war neo-avant-garde collectivism, the ideal was "to realize itself not in the social model or plan but in the to-and-fro of cultural exchange".<sup>28</sup> Currently, community actions usually serve local changes – in public spaces they are aimed against the commercialization and privatization of areas that should be open to the public. Often, however, these are collectives convened ad hoc – for example, in the form of flashmobs, actions and interventions, which work for a specific purpose.

Subcultural communities, which expressed themselves through their own music, dance, fashion or art, functioned in entirely different ways. With their help, values such as loyalty, hierarchy, honour (i.e. respecting the internal rules of a group) and individuality (having personal agency in a community) were reaffirmed.<sup>29</sup> Graffiti was an example of such subcultural expression. Collective spraying of letters would create a sense of community with other writers as well as a sense of competition. Internal hierarchy was based on very specific values – efficiency and the technique of execution, number of completed works as well as risk taken during their creation. Bigger illegal graffiti compositions that were complicated and time-consuming, requiring agility and speed were usually executed in teams. Such works were based on a single project and individual styles of different artists are almost imperceptible for an average recipient. Who was part of the crew was usually only reported by tag signatures accompanying the piece, legible primarily within their environment.

There do exist examples of teamwork in street art. However, these are usually duets such as Etam Cru (Przemysław Blejzyk aka Sainer and Mateusz Gapski aka Bezt), Os Gemeos (Octavio and Gustavo Pandolfo), or Herakut. Sometimes, several artists are invited to participate in a project, creating temporary collectives.<sup>30</sup> This serves as an exchange of experiences, but also as a promotion of oneself by appearing in recognized company. After all, inviting another artist to work together is a sign of respect and recognition for the invitee, just like among musicians. During festivals and jams, artists usually work side by side, sometimes on one wall, but each piece has its own individual style.<sup>31</sup> Street art is not a closed group – it is neither governed by internal rules, nor based on direct competition. Each artist (or each crew) works out their own style that becomes recognizable even by random recipients. Interestingly,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> B. Akkuş, T. Postmes, K. Stroebe, (2017) *Community Collectivism: A social dynamic approach to conceptualizing culture*, „PLoS ONE” 12(9). 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185725> (accessed: 15.07.2022).

<sup>30</sup> See: B. Marcic, *The extraordinary potential of street art collaboration*, „Wilde Walls”, November 21, 2014, <https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/find-your-crew-collaborative-urban-art-feature-article-2014> (accessed: 15.07.2022).

<sup>31</sup> Hence the name of one of the most famous graffiti festivals – „Meeting of styles”.

however, recognition does not have to stem from innovation, as it was during modernism. Repetition and duplication of older styles are commonplace in this case. Throughout the tradition of all art, artists have always looked for their own means of expression. I would even dare to say that recognition has replaced the originality of the avant-garde. Although artists rarely reveal their real names, their nicknames are known all over the world as their personal brands. In his famous book "Street logos", Tristan Manco wrote that "making your mark is the essence of graffiti culture. (...) A tag is a small advertisement for an artist - a logo for ego."<sup>32</sup> In street art, the logo is represented by the entire work, not just the signature.

### **The end. Scattered around the world - collected online**

A global collective of individualities - this is what street art looks like - a kaleidoscope of changing images that appear and disappear within urban spaces but always remain within Internet resources. There exist almost as many websites promoting, documenting and commenting on street art as there are works themselves. All artists have their own website, a social media account, or a tab on portals of galleries or organizations. This phenomenon creates an impression of an integrated community of artists and art lovers. It is, however, such a large and diverse group of people guided by varying values, with differing levels of reflectiveness and different views on art, that it makes it rather difficult to speak about any sort of community in this case. Artists come from different backgrounds - some are amateurs, others have received artistic education, some create only on the streets, others occasionally, some act illegally, others officially. One can stick stickers printed on a home printer, decorate trees in knitted clothes or create large-format paintings. There are no binding rules or specific requirements. It is similar when it comes to the audience: some of the viewers are street art enthusiasts who travel around the world to see it, others follow it primarily on the Internet, and others encounter street art while simply walking down the street or seeing it daily through a window. The impression of saturation of some cities with street art is getting stronger and stronger, as is the case with the Internet. Undoubtedly, it democratizes both spaces and expands the group of creators and recipients of culture.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> T. Manco, *Street Logos*, Thames&Hudson London New York, 2004, p. 43.

<sup>33</sup> See: Ł. Biskupski, *Prosto z ulicy. Sztuki wizualne w dobie mediów społecznościowych i kultury uczestnictwa - street art*, Fundacja Bęc Zmiana, Instytut Kultury Polskiej UW, Warszawa 2017, pp. 202-203.

And how should one write about street art? As long as it is dynamic open art that is subject to change, it is not really worth defining or theorizing about. Integrating methods have not worked so far, and no monograph can exhaust its sources. The latter does not necessarily mean that street art should not be subject to thorough research – the more so because short texts duplicated by hundreds of portals do not contribute much to a general reflection on this movement. It should rather be the type of research that approaches it from different perspectives, using different methods and combining various disciplines. I would be careful when trying to evaluate and draw universalizing conclusions that indicate the uniqueness and novelty of street art, especially when observing its ability to freely reach for everything that has already been. Street art is one of the manifestations of the work of the transversal mind, which "operates processually, in transitions".<sup>34</sup> Working between dichotomies and not respecting boundaries, rules and habits is a characteristic feature of this art – of course, it is only optional and by no means binding.

Translated by Marta Toborek

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## **STREET ART: POMIĘDZY INTEGRACJĄ A ROZPROSZENIEM. GLOBALNY KOLEKTYW INDYWIDUALNOŚCI (streszczenie)**

Street art jest obecnie zjawiskiem skupiającym artystów z całego świata i występującym w niemal każdym zakątku globu - jest różnorodny, ale rozpoznawalny. To powrót do tradycji sztuki, a jednocześnie wyjście poza sztukę - rozprasza i jednoczy, wykorzystuje wszelkie możliwości techniczne, stylistyczne i organizacyjne. To największy konglomerat indywidualności, ale jest też pełen powtórzeń, kompilacji i imitacji. Tworzy mikronarracje, ale też często odwołuje się do wielkich narracji historycznych. Niechętnie poddaje się teoriom i definicjom, nie wyznacza żadnych granic, nie stawia żadnych warunków. Choć street art jest popularny i zrozumiały, pozostaje na marginesie Świata Sztuki. Jest barometrem najnowszych zjawisk społecznych, politycznych i kulturowych. Warto obserwować street art, aby być na bieżąco z najważniejszymi dyskursami, a czasem nawet być o krok do przodu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Street art, graffiti, globalizacja

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