



What Is Street Art?

Andrea Lorenzo Baldini 
Nanjing University, CN

RESEARCH ARTICLE

HUP HELSINKI
UNIVERSITY
PRESS



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University

ABSTRACT

What is street art? This paper offers a definition of street art as an art kind or art form based on its essential value: its subversiveness. It argues that street art is essentially subversive in virtue of using public space as a technical resource. By hijacking a portion of the urban landscape with its colourful forms and witty designs, street art challenges familiar ways of practising the city, while creating a ‘temporary autonomous zone’ of free expression. There, corporate control over the city’s visible surfaces is ridiculed and people reclaim their right to use the city. In this sense, street art functions as a carnivalesque tactic of social resistance, favouring the emergence of alternative ways to imagine our urban life and our uses of public space. By considering its subversiveness, one can also explain how street art (i) significantly differs from official public art; (ii) includes graffiti as its original and most radical style.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Andrea Lorenzo Baldini
Nanjing University, CN
baldini_and@hotmail.com

KEYWORDS:
street art; graffiti;
subversiveness; public
space; carnivalesque
resistance

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:
Baldini, Andrea Lorenzo.
‘What Is Street Art?’
*Estetika: The European
Journal of Aesthetics*
LIX/XV, no. 1 (2022): pp.
1–21. DOI: [https://doi.
org/10.33134/eeja.234](https://doi.org/10.33134/eeja.234)

What is street art? This question has attracted much scholarly interest from both philosophy of art and other related disciplines.¹ Though some commentators are sceptical about defining street art, aestheticians are not. Here, in continuity with such an optimism about the possibility of demarcation, I offer a definition of street art as an *art kind* or art form based on its essential value. Focusing on value has the following advantage: it allows us to explain ‘the fact that we value and desire the making and the consuming of [street] art’.² In doing so, my definition exhibits strong explanatory and critical power, whose effectiveness is best exemplified when distinguishing street art from official public art. This in turn provides us with good reasons to accept my account as a serious candidate in the theoretical pursuit of defining this urban art form.

While not denying that street art often possesses a plurality of values (including aesthetic, moral, and religious values), I argue that what essentially characterizes this art kind is its subversive value. Street art is subversive insofar as it turns inside out accepted norms of visibility in public spaces. By appropriating in a carnivalesque way the city’s visible surfaces, street art functions as a fearless act of social and political resistance against commodified uses of urban spaces. By reclaiming a right to free expression for all, street art is a creative, playful, and effective strategy for claiming back our cities – one street at a time.

Section II begins to fashion my account of street art as a subversive art kind. Section III offers further evidence in favour of the claim that street art is essentially subversive by proposing two distinct arguments: the fake street art and the toothless mural arguments. Section IV defends my proposal from some objections raised by Nick Riggle, and Section V shows how my definition can help us understand how street art relates to similar artistic practices in the public domain – namely, official public art and graffiti.

II. STREET ART AS A SUBVERSIVE ART KIND

In his book *Beyond Art*, Dominic McIver Lopes identifies art forms or kinds with *appreciative kinds*.³ An appreciative kind is a group of particulars sharing a common

1 See, among others, Nicholas Alden Riggle, ‘Street Art: The Transfiguration of the Commonplaces’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Street Art Criticism* 68 (2010): 243–57; Sondra Bacharach, ‘Street Art and Consent’, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 55 (2015): 481–95; Andrea Baldini, ‘Street Art: A Reply to Riggle’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74 (2016): 187–91; Peter Bengtsen, *The Street Art World* (Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2014); Alison Young, *Street Art, Public City: Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Ulrich Blanché, ‘Street Art and Related Terms: Discussion and Working Definition’, *Street Art and Urban Creativity Scientific Journal* 1 (2015): 32–39; ‘Qu’est-ce que le street art? Essai et discussion des définitions’, *Cahiers de narratologie* 29 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.4000/narratologie.7397>; *Banksy: Urban Art in a Material World* (Marburg: Tectum, 2016); Cedar Lewisohn, *Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution* (New York: Abrams, 2008); Magda Danysz, *From Style Writing to Art: A Street Art Anthology* (Rome: DRAGO, 2010); Christophe Genin, *Le street art au tournant: Reconnaissances d’un genre* (Brussels: Les Impressions nouvelles, 2013); Tony Chackal, ‘Of Materiality and Meaning: The Illegality Condition in Street Art’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74 (2016): 359–70; Peter Bengtsen, ‘Beyond the Public Art Machine: A Critical Examination of Street Art as Public Art’, *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift / Journal of Art History* 82 (2013): 63–80; Adam Andrzejewski, ‘Authenticity Manifested: Street Art and Artification’, *Rivista di Estetica* 64 (2017): 167–84.

2 Nick Zangwill, ‘Groundrules in the Philosophy of Art’, *Philosophy* 70 (1995): 540.

3 Dominic McIver Lopes, *Beyond Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), chap. 7.

feature or value. We normally appreciate a specimen of an appreciative kind in comparison with arbitrarily any other specimens in that kind.⁴ The essential value characterizing an art kind serves as a criterion for both demarcation and evaluation. For instance, a capacity to toast is the essential value characterizing the appreciative kind 'toaster', whereby we identify those particulars that are toasters and, among them, those that toast comparatively better than others.

It is reasonable to look at street art as an appreciative kind in Lopes's sense.⁵ In effect, we normally appreciate works of street art in comparison with arbitrarily any other work of that kind in ways that inform and shape our judgements. For instance, the production of Banksy – arguably today's most popular street artist – includes a wide variety of street artworks. We normally appreciate those works in comparison with the production of other street artists, including OBEY, Blu, and many others, and not with that of, for instance, Caravaggio or any other examples of traditional painting.

Moreover, as I shall argue, all genuine works of street art share a common value. That essential value is their subversive value, or *subversiveness*.⁶ In this sense, my theory of street art starts with the following schema:

x is a work of street art = x is subversive...,

which, one should notice, is still partial. In the remainder of this section, I will complete it by filling in the blank with two additional conditions.

That street art is subversive appears obvious when considering works in that kind that carry an explicit message of political protest. In these cases, street art's subversive value is a function of its capacity to challenge dominant political forces or systems of beliefs. Politically and socially conscious street artworks that have an instrumental place in resistance movements are common around the world.⁷ Some of these works are iconic examples of this art kind, and occupy an important position in its history. From local practitioners such as the Frankfurt-based COR and Bobby Borderline (**fig. 1**) to internationally acclaimed superstars such as Banksy, Blu, ROA, and Ron English, street artists are very often political.⁸ In this sense, politically charged pieces are countless, and movements of social and political change in Africa, Asia, and Europe often use street art as a tool of protest against governments, institutions, policies, and behaviours that are deemed unjust.⁹

4 Dominic McIver Lopes, *A Philosophy of Computer Art* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 17.

5 I am here developing a proposal previously made in Andrea Baldini, 'Dangerous Liaisons: Graffiti in Da Museum', in *Un(Authorized) / Commissioned*, by Pietro Rivasi and Andrea Baldini (Rome: WholeTrain, 2017), 29; *A Philosophy Guide to Street Art and the Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 5.

6 See also Baldini, 'Street Art'; *Philosophy Guide*.

7 Sondra Bacharach, 'Finding Your Voice in the Streets: Street Art and Epistemic Injustice', *Monist* 101 (2018): 31–43; 'Street Art and Consent'.

8 For a discussion of explicitly political street art, see also Andrea Baldini, 'An Urban Carnival on the City Walls: The Visual Representation of Financial Power in European Street Art', *Journal of Visual Culture* 14 (2015): 246–52.

9 Leonard Bartolomeus, 'Street Art in Indonesian Social and Political Life', *Guggenheim Blogs* (blog), 17 October 2012, <http://blogs.guggenheim.org/map/street-art-in-indonesian-social-and-political-life>; Baldini, 'Urban Carnival'; ryanbyrne123, 'Political Street Art and Protest', *Street Art in Cape Town* (blog), 23 March 2015, <https://wallsofcapeatown.wordpress.com/2015/03/23/political-street-art-and-protest>; Basma Hamdy and Don Karl, *Walls of Freedom: Street Art of The Egyptian Revolution* (Berlin: From Here to Fame, 2014).



Figure 1 COR's and Bobby Borderline's *Lady Justice*. Photograph taken by the author.

And yet many famous examples of street art do not carry such an explicit politically subversive message. Consider, for instance, MOMO's *Manhattan Tag* or Etn!k's geometric landscapes (**fig. 2**). There is nothing obviously political or subversive in that thin line of yellow paint that MOMO used to write his name in monumental scale on the pavements of New York City streets. Similarly, the dreamlike floating geometric landscapes that are the content of many murals that Etn!k has painted are not explicit messages of protest. But works of street art – even those that are not politically conscious such as MOMO's and Etn!k's – possess subversive value in a deeper sense.



Figure 2 A mural by Etn!k. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

To explain street art's deeper and essential subversiveness, let me begin by introducing the notion of 'the distribution of the sensible' (*le partage du sensible*).¹⁰ I borrow

10 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Lockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

that notion from Jacques Rancière's influential account of the relationship between aesthetics and politics. With the distribution of the sensible, Rancière indicates, among other things, the set of social norms (including positive laws, habits, customs, and so on) regulating what can be visible in the public spaces of a given society. Through social norms, groups distinguish between those peculiar forms of expression and contents that are and those that are not acceptable for public display. The visibility of pornographic content, for instance, is limited in most countries, which generally prohibit public presentation of explicit images.

Scholars interested in public space from a wide variety of disciplines, including sociology, urban studies, geography, and economics, tend to agree on the following point: current social norms regulating visibility in modern cities grant a monopoly over uses of perceivable urban surfaces to commercial communication.¹¹ As a consequence of the massive presence of advertising, our cities have been turned into branded hubs. That set of social norms constitutes a specific distribution of the sensible, which in my previous work I have called the 'corporate regime of visibility' – or just the 'corporate regime'.¹²

The corporate regime has profoundly transformed the nature and uses of public spaces in the modern city. Once gathering venues and sites of casual encounter, today's piazzas and streets are generally reduced to places of economic transaction. When I make that claim, I am not suggesting that all public spaces have become private. That would be certainly false. My intent is to bring attention to the two following points. First, the rise of privately owned public spaces (POPS), if not yet definitive, is a growing and alarming trend.¹³ By acquiring property over streets and squares, private corporations can largely determine how citizens can use the city. As we have seen, for instance during the protests of the 2011 Occupy Movement, direct corporate control over urban public spaces can significantly limit people's freedom of expression and assembly.¹⁴

Second, the corporate regime has transformed the way in which we generally conceptualize public space, turning it into a commodity to be sold and bought.

11 Laura Baker, 'Public Sites versus Public Sights: The Progressive Response to Outdoor Advertising and the Commercialization of Public Space', *American Quarterly* 59 (2007): 1187–1213; Michel de Certeau, *Culture in the Plural*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Kurt Iveson, 'Branded Cities: Outdoor Advertising, Urban Governance, and the Outdoor Media Landscape', *Antipode* 44 (2012): 151–74; Armand Mattelart, *Advertising International: The Privatization of Public Space* (London: Routledge, 1991).

12 Andrea Baldini, 'Quand les murs de béton muets se transforment en un carnaval de couleur: Le street art comme stratégie de résistance sociale contre le modèle commercial de la visibilité', *Cahiers de narratologie* 30 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.4000/narratologie.7469>; *Philosophy Guide*, 6.

13 Timothy Weaver, 'The Privatization of Public Space: The New Enclosures', SSRN research paper, 21 August 2014, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2454138>.

14 For a discussion of this issue with respect to the Occupy Movement, see *ibid.* For broader analyses, see, among others, Tridib Banerjee, 'The Future of Public Space: Beyond Invented Streets and Reinvented Places', *Journal of the American Planning Association* 67 (2001): 9–24; Margaret Kohn, *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Kenneth T. Jackson, 'All the World's a Mall: Reflections on the Social and Economic Consequences of the American Shopping Center', *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 1111–21; Dale Leorke, 'The Struggle to Reclaim the City: An Interview With Michael Sorkin', *Space and Culture* 18 (2015): 98–105; Setha M. Low and Neil Smith, eds., *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford, 2003); Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

Virtually all uses of communal places today follow this business approach – a logic of profit, if you wish: we generally buy access to public spaces through a fee, and we are allowed to use them because we have paid for it. As scholars emphasize, this in turn diminishes a person's opportunities for conviviality, spontaneity, and casual encounter.¹⁵ Borrowing Baudrillard's words, the corporate regime has left our urban communities with only 'a vestige of sociality'.¹⁶

Once acknowledging how deeply the corporate regime shapes the nature and uses of public spaces – and, by the same token, our lives – we can understand street art's subversive value. As Irvine convincingly argues, by introducing unexpected visual forms and contents in the city landscape, street art questions advertising's dominion of public space.¹⁷ Moreover, as a 'gift' to the city, street art is the visible proof that one can use the street in ways that do not respond to the logic of profit.¹⁸ In this sense, street art's subversive value has to do *primarily* (though not necessarily, as I will clarify in Section IV) with its capacity to appropriate streets and squares in ways that destabilize the corporate regime.

By appreciating the preceding, I can then further specify the schema representing my theory of street art by adding the first of the two additional conditions:

x is a work of street art = x is subversive, where subversiveness is a capacity to challenge the distribution of the sensible, primarily the corporate regime...

As examples of an art kind challenging primarily the corporate regime, works of street art then produce deep discontinuities in the nature and uses of urban spaces, which momentarily stop being mere surfaces for advertising and become showcases of free artworks. Those places are a variety of 'temporary autonomous zone', as social activist Hakim Bey would say, where self-expression is unrestricted and not driven by profit.¹⁹ Street art's subversiveness is therefore essentially linked with *free* expression in two distinct and yet related senses of the term: unconstrained, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, at no cost.

It is important to emphasize that street art need not be the only art kind capable of being subversive in the sense specified above. One could reasonably admit that galleries, concert halls, and even social media may very well include things that can do that. What makes street art unique is the particular technical resource exploited to challenge the distribution of the sensible: the use of public space. As Lopes argues, art kinds are in effect partly defined by their medium profile, that is, a non-empty

15 Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Norton, 1992); Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*, 3rd. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 1999); Andrea Baldini, 'Street Art, Decorum, and the Politics of Urban Aesthetics', in 'Urban Aesthetics', ed. Sanna Lehtinen, special vol. 8, *Contemporary Aesthetics* (2020), <https://contempaesthetics.org/2020/07/16/street-art-decorum-and-the-politics-of-urban-aesthetics/>.

16 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

17 Martin Irvine, 'The Work on the Street: Street Art and Visual Culture', in *The Handbook of Visual Culture*, ed. Ian Heywood et al. (London: Berg, 2012), 235–78.

18 *Ibid.*, 252.

19 Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991).

set of technical resources.²⁰ Works in a particular kind exploit specific resources to realize their values. Therefore, here is the completion of the schema defining street art, adding the second condition:

x is a work of street art = x is subversive, where subversiveness is a capacity to challenge the distribution of the sensible, primarily the corporate regime, by virtue of using public space as a technical resource.

By appropriating the urban landscape, works of street art are subversive instances of free expression disrupting the expectations of passers-by, who respond to those space invasions with different reactions of shock, amusement, anger, or disgust. Viewers frequently share with others those reactions to street artworks, which in this sense are catalysts for spontaneous dialogue and exchange.²¹ Thanks to its dialogic possibilities, street art can then also facilitate conviviality and casual encounter.²² Around the city's walls appropriated by street art's colourful forms and witty designs, our communal lives restart – though perhaps only momentarily. In the following section, I provide further evidence in favour of the claim that street art's essential value is its subversiveness.

III. FAKE STREET ART AND TOOTHLESS MURALS

The idea that street art primarily questions what I call the corporate regime is widespread among practitioners. For instance, Ron English, Shepard Fairey, and Banksy explicitly admit that, through their works, they aim at challenging the transformation of public spaces in advertising locations.²³ Though this general tendency suggests that my position is rooted in the actual practices of street art, it does not per se establish that street art essentially possesses subversive value. One can certainly find street artists who would not subscribe to that intention.²⁴ This is *not*, however, a fatal issue. By simply hijacking public space, I believe, works of street art are essentially subversive in spite of their creators' plan. To prove this, in the remainder of this section, I offer two distinct arguments.

First, commissioned works using urban styles (graffiti, stencil graffiti, and so on) for advertising some commercial products are generally considered – if at all – inauthentic cases of street art. Confino defines this variety of works as 'fake street art' and, by borrowing the words of environmental campaigner L. Hunter Lovins, he clearly expresses his negative judgement about this form of communication: 'fake street art sucks'.²⁵ Call this the *fake street art argument*.

20 Lopes, *Beyond Art*, 139–40.

21 Irvine, 'Work on the Street', 255.

22 Grant Kester explores art's dialogic possibilities in *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). He does not address street art directly, though.

23 Irvine, 'Work on the Street', 251. See also Young, *Street Art, Public City*, 28.

24 For an interesting discussion of the role of intentions in street art, see Shelby Moser, 'Artist Sanction and Street Works', *Visual Inquiry* 7 (2018): 19–27.

25 Jo Confino, "'Fake Street Art Sucks': Perrier Replaces Williamsburg's Nelson Mandela Mural', *Guardian*, 26 September 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/sep/26/fake-street-art-sucks-perrier-replaces-williamsburgs-nelson-mandela-mural-with-huge-advertisement>.

When considering this argument, the case of Fauxreel's *Vespa Squareheads* is instructive. Fauxreel, whose real name is Dan Bergeron, is a street artist known for his photograffiti style. In 2008, he partnered up with Vespa – the famous Italian brand of scooters – to illegally install 324 seven-foot-tall poster ads in the streets of Toronto and other Canadian cities: the *Vespa Squareheads* (fig. 3). Though these works visually and stylistically resembled Fauxreel's regular production, street art lovers generally refused to consider those posters to be examples of street art.²⁶ Moreover, because of his commercial sell-out, some even started to question the status of Fauxreel's previous works.²⁷

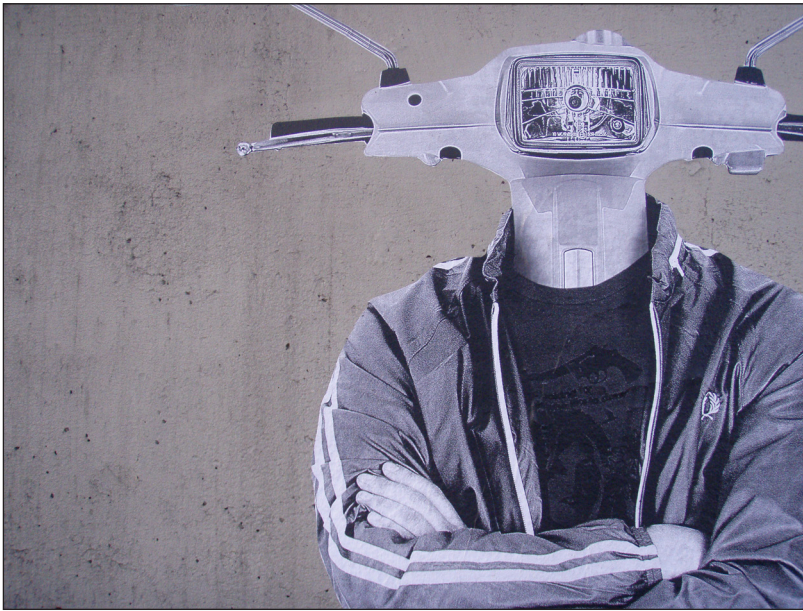


Figure 3 Fauxreel, *Vespa Head Man*, Vancouver, 2008. Photo by Shallom Johnson (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0). <https://bit.ly/3d6j7nk>.

The upshot of the fake street art argument is the following one: appreciators of street art generally refuse to consider those works that lack capacity to challenge the corporate regime to be genuine examples of this art kind. Those works follow the logic of profit, which street art radically rejects. It is not enough to possess certain aesthetic, formal, and stylistic features for a work to qualify as street art. To be street art is not simply to look in a particular way, to follow a certain style, or to use the street as an artistic resource. A street artwork is something that has a particular link with the city, embodying a distinctive value: a subversive one. Street art is something that primarily aims at questioning the corporate regime and its control over the city's visible surfaces by reappropriating them for self-expression.

Fauxreel's *Vespa Squareheads* also illustrates another significant point. It shows how street art differs from illegally produced commercial art. With this, I reject Sondra Bacharach's suggestion according to which 'aconsensually produced commercial art may well qualify as street art'.²⁸ This claim is quite surprising, insofar as it seems to be

26 Hrag Vartanian, 'Street Art Politics & Commercialization... How Far Is Too Far?', *Hyperallergic*, 25 February 2010, <http://hyperallergic.com/3415/street-art-politics-commercialization>.

27 Patricia Simoes, 'Vespa Ads Not Cool', *Spacing Toronto* (blog), 30 April 2008, <http://spacing.ca/toronto/2008/04/30/vespa-ads-not-cool>; Rob Walker, 'Vespa Marketing Inspires Fauxreel Backlash?', *Marketing* (blog), 16 June 2008, <http://www.marketing.com/journal/?p=1310>.

28 Bacharach, 'Street Art and Consent', 487.

at odds with her own definition of street art. In effect, to the aconsensuality condition, Bacharach adds an activist one: street art is not only installed without consent, in her view, but also 'constitutes an act of defiant activism designed to challenge (and change) the viewer's experience of his or her environment'.²⁹ Fauxreel's *Vespa Squareheads* or any other example of guerrilla advertising seems unable to fulfil the activist condition. If they could, this in turn would imply that advertising can sometimes be activism. This idea is counterintuitive, and would require a sustained defence, which Bacharach never provides.³⁰ Street art does not simply appropriate urban spaces but primarily challenges their commodification.

The second argument starts from acknowledging a widely agreed point about street art and its link with the art world. Many conceptualize street art as in opposition to official artistic institutions.³¹ However, when deprived of its subversive value, street art is easily reabsorbed within the official art world. This in turn questions its identity. This is the case, for instance, with street art in mainland China. As David Volodzko describes them, Chinese artworks in styles usually linked with street art (for example, graffiti, stencil graffiti, wheat paste posters, and so on) are 'toothless'.³² Call this the *toothless murals argument*.

When considering examples of Chinese urban art, the general absence of subversive value is a consequence of several factors. Let me list what I consider the three most relevant ones. First, afraid of serious legal repercussions, artists abstain from creating controversial pieces.³³ Second, thanks to their impressive sizes, Chinese metropolises provide artists with large sections of the urban landscape that are free from commercial communication.³⁴ Thus, it is rather easy to create artworks that do not enter into conflict with the corporate regime. Third, practices of wall writing are widespread in China, and have a very long history. Chinese people often ignore the presence of graffiti or similar works, and hardly consider them something challenging the corporate regime.³⁵

Because of their lack of subversiveness, Chinese urban styles are fashionable trends of Chinese mainstream art. Zhang Dali, who is considered the first Chinese street artist, has recently criticized the status of Chinese urban art. In his view, street art 'is the fashion in China these days and has lost its meaning as protest'.³⁶ For many, such an assimilation jeopardizes the status of Chinese urban artworks as street art. Again, this

29 Ibid., 481.

30 For a discussion of this issue, see Walter Wymer, 'Rethinking the Boundaries of Social Marketing: Activism or Advertising?' *Journal of Business Research* 63 (2010): 99–103.

31 Peter Bengtsen, 'Carelessness or Curatorial Chutzpah? On Controversies Surrounding Street Art in the Museum', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift / Journal of Art History* 84 (2015): 220–33; Riggle, 'Street Art'.

32 David Volodzko, 'Graffiti in China, Part Two: The Writing on the Wall', *Diplomat*, 27 May 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/graffiti-in-china-part-two-the-writing-on-the-wall>.

33 Minna Valjakka, 'Graffiti in China – Chinese Graffiti?' *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (2011): 81.

34 Ally Thibault, 'Beijing's Thriving Graffiti Culture May Surprise You', *The World*, 21 April 2014, <https://theworld.org/stories/2014-04-21/beijings-thriving-graffiti-culture-may-surprise-you>.

35 Lu Pan, 'Writing at the End of History: Reflections on Two Cases of Graffiti in Hong Kong', *Public Art Dialogue* 4 (2014): 147–66; Valjakka, 'Graffiti in China – Chinese Graffiti?'.

36 Volodzko, 'Graffiti in China'.

shows that, when deprived of its subversive value, a street artwork loses something at the very core of its identity.

Here, let me add a further point that will better clarify my analysis of street art on the background of the scholarly literature on this subject. There is strong consensus that its relationship with the urban context significantly determines the meaning of a work of street art.³⁷ But that link is, in effect, symmetrical. While its meaning depends in part on the nature of the context within which it is placed, street art also affects the significance of the places that it occupies: it rebelliously *transforms* them.³⁸ That is street art's subversive value. Street artworks in effect turn their respective sites into contested spaces where those powers managing visibility in modern cities are challenged. In this sense, by echoing Lefebvre's seminal work on urban revolution, through street art individuals reclaim their right to the city: the right to shape and reshape the city's geographies and to use its resources.³⁹ In the following section I consider two criticisms that Nick Riggle raises against the idea that subversiveness is street art's essential value.

IV. DEFENDING SUBVERSIVENESS

In defending his definition against my criticisms, Riggle raises two objections to the theory of street art that I am further developing here. First, Riggle claims that works of street art do not essentially challenge commercial uses of public spaces. Second, he explicitly denies that street art is essentially subversive. In what follows, I show that both are unsuccessful. Let me consider each objection individually.

First, though admitting that street art and commercial communication are in conflict, Riggle argues that the corporate regime is not necessarily the target of street art's subversiveness.⁴⁰ In general, Riggle's claim seems correct. However, it misconstrues my view by ignoring a crucial step of the argument. In my previous work, I have maintained that street art questions 'norms and conventions regulating acceptable uses of public space', that is, the distribution of the sensible in Rancière's sense.⁴¹ However, as anticipated, I add that street art 'primarily' and not uniquely or necessarily opposes commercial communication.⁴² In principle, street art can challenge different distributions of the sensible, though it is more likely to challenge the corporate regime for an empirical reason: such a distribution of the sensible tends to dominate visibility in modern cities.

37 See, among others, Bengtsen, 'Beyond the Public Art Machine'; 'Carelessness or Curatorial Chutzpah?'; Riggle, 'Street Art'.

38 In 'Beyond the Public Art Machine', Bengtsen passingly recognizes this point. However, he considers street art's capacity to 'question the order of public space' (p. 76) just a possibility, and not – as I do – the essential value characterizing this urban art kind.

39 See Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). See also Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, ed. and trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996); David Harvey, 'The Right to the City', *New Left Review*, no. 53 (2008): 23–40.

40 Nick Riggle, 'Using the Street for Art: A Reply to Baldini', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74 (2016): 192.

41 Baldini, 'Street Art', 188.

42 Ibid.

As a piece of evidence in favour of this rebuttal of Riggle's criticism, one could look at my work with Pamela Pietrucci on street art in post-disaster contexts.⁴³ There, we explicitly emphasize that in contexts such as L'Aquila – a city close to Rome that was almost destroyed by an earthquake in 2009 – street art challenges what we have called the 'post-disaster regime of visibility' (fig. 4).⁴⁴ There, commercial communication had (and still has) no space. What one can see is desolation and destruction, mixed with military control. In that peculiar setting, street art challenges that particular distribution of the sensible rather than the corporate regime.



Figure 4 An example of yarnbombing in L'Aquila, 2014. Uploaded on Flickr by the user Mettiamoci Una Pezza (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0). <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mettiamociunapezza/28053681911>.

Riggle's second objection challenges the more general idea that street art is essentially subversive. Riggle mentions, among others, Bruno Taylor's *Bus Stop Swings* as a counterexample to such a claim.⁴⁵ These works consist of swings installed at regular bus stops. For Riggle, these are not subversive since they do not 'necessarily undermine the dominant forms of bus stop [but] propose new ways of achieving the goals of good urban design'.⁴⁶ In his view, rather than rebellious artworks, these are constructive proposals directed at informing strategies of urban development.

There are several ways to reply to this second objection. One could point out that the strategy of the counterexample is generally problematic. When we are dealing with a relatively new and non-canonical practice such as street art, looking for counterexamples may very well appear to be a non-starter. One could simply say that Taylor's swings – or any other work that he cites as counterexamples – are not street art in the first place, while claiming that they are urban design.

43 Andrea Baldini and Pamela Pietrucci, 'Knitting a Community Back Together: Spontaneous Public Art as Citizenship Engagement in Post-Earthquake L'Aquila', in *Performative Citizenship: Public Art, Urban Design, and Political Participation*, ed. Luigi Musarò and Laura Iannelli (Milan: Mimesis International, 2017), 115–32.

44 *Ibid.*, 119, emphasis in the original.

45 Riggle, 'Using the Street for Art', 193.

46 *Ibid.*

However, I think that there is a more interesting reply, which meets Riggle's objection head on. This reply denies that Taylor's project is an exercise in good urban design and that the bus stop swings are subversive in that specific sense in which street artworks are. These claims make the argument that grounds Riggle's second criticism unsound. In the remainder of this section, I argue for the claim that Taylor's bus stop swings are not design but rather subversive street artworks. This in turn will allow me to specify in more detail how I understand subversiveness in the context of street art.

Considering Taylor's bus stop swings as an actual proposal for a bus stop is in effect controversial. Riggle, I fear, is romanticizing Taylor's project, while failing to see not only its impracticality but also – more importantly – its threatening nature. As many netizens have emphasized, the swings were an obvious safety hazard.⁴⁷ No accidents have been reported, but that might be simply a matter of luck. I doubt that any urban designer or planner would consider Taylor's street artworks a serious proposal. They are interesting, but not functional bus stops.

My interpretation of Taylor's project as a provocation rather than an actual pitch finds support in his own conceptualization of the bus stops. While explaining the intention grounding his works, Taylor writes:

71% of adults used to play on the streets when they were young. 21% of children do so now. [...] This project is a study into different ways of bringing play back into public space. [...] It asks us to question the current framework for public space and whether it is sufficient while also giving permission for young people to play in public.⁴⁸

By developing his playful bus stops, Taylor is not looking for new strategies of urban design but he is searching for tactics questioning current uses of public spaces, that is, the dominant distribution of the sensible. Contrary to what Riggle claims, undermining dominant forms of bus stop design is Taylor's goal: he intended to create what one can reasonably call a subversive installation, that is, street art.

It is worth emphasizing how Taylor describes his bus stop project in the caption of a video that he uploaded to YouTube. He writes: 'This is a film about *hijacking* a bus stop.'⁴⁹ Taylor's use of the term 'hijacking' is arguably not random. He is not talking about redesigning the bus stop but about subverting it, signalling the rebellious nature of his project, which – one should remember – was illegal. Though street art's subversiveness cannot be simply reduced to matters of illegality (as we have seen, for instance, with Fauxreel's *Vespa Squareheads*), one should not ignore the fact that violating the law is – by borrowing Tony Chackal's language – a 'prototypical and paradigmatic' feature of street art, grounding its subversiveness.⁵⁰

47 For a sample of comments emphasizing the hazardous nature of Taylor's bus-swing, see 'Bruno Taylor's Playful Spaces', *Apartment Therapy*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120115204114/https://www.apartmenttherapy.com/bruno-taylors-playful-spaces-62134>.

48 'Bruno Taylor's Playful Spaces', *Wooster Collective*, 18 August 2008, <http://www.woostercollective.com/post/bruno-taylors-playful-spaces> (emphasis added).

49 Bruno Hannibal-Taylor, *Playful Spaces*, video, 3:35, 3 April 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDqbb0eHVXA>.

50 Chackal, 'Of Materiality and Meaning', 363. For a discussion of the relationship between street art and illegality, see also Andrea Baldini, 'Beauty and the Behest: Distinguishing Legal Judgment and Aesthetic Judgment in the Context of 21st Century Street Art and Graffiti', *Rivista di Estetica* 65 (2017): 91–106; *Philosophy Guide*.

I should emphasize that Taylor's chosen jargon echoes how scholars conceptualize and characterize contemporary movements of resistance, and in particular those relying on carnivalesque forms of dissent. Carnavalesque protest exploits strategies such as appropriation, misappropriation, irony, laughter, parody, and satire as tactics of rebellion.⁵¹ Scholars often explain their carnivalesque nature in Bakhtinian terms.⁵² According to this view, an essential feature of the carnivalesque is a sense of fearlessness towards official hierarchies. By overcoming fear, carnivalesque practices create chaos where there is usually order, thus ridiculing 'the symbols of power and violence [that are] turned inside out' (fig. 5).⁵³ It is in this carnivalesque sense that Taylor's bus stops – just like other works of street art – are subversive, as a growing scholarly trend in street art studies suggests.⁵⁴



Figure 5 An ironic piece by 2Old. Photo courtesy of the artist.

By hijacking a bus stop, Taylor's swings introduce chaos where there is usually authority and order, while mocking those in power. His installations subvert the corporate regime and its preference for advertisement, which usually dominate the visible surfaces of common bus stops – as one can clearly notice in the photographs and videos documenting Taylor's swings. In this inverted world, just like during the carnival, the artist-fool becomes king of the street, while reclaiming everyone's right to playfully use and express themselves in public spaces: a right to *freely* (in both senses specified above) use one's city.⁵⁵

51 Marieke de Goede, 'Carnival of Money: Politics of Dissent in an Era of Globalizing Finance', in *The Global Resistance Reader*, ed. Louise Amoore (London: Routledge, 2005), 379–91.

52 See, in particular, Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

53 *Ibid.*, 91.

54 Tijen Tunali, 'The Art of Resistance: Carnival Aesthetics and the Gezi Street Protests', *ASAP/Journal* 3 (2018): 377–99; Lu Pan, 'Who Is Occupying Wall and Street: Graffiti and Urban Spatial Politics in Contemporary China', *Continuum* 28 (2014): 136–53; Baldini, 'Urban Carnival on the City Walls'; 'Street Art, Decorum'.

55 Interestingly enough, graffiti writers call their peers of talent 'kings'.

Street art's political significance resides just in its capacity of subverting laws and norms regulating visibility through the use of public spaces. By borrowing Foucault's terminology, Taylor's swings 'make strange' the familiar bus stop.⁵⁶ In making strange something familiar, we show its lack of necessity. And 'as soon as we no longer think things as one formerly thought them', Foucault adds, 'transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible'.⁵⁷

Subversion is about momentarily – and yet effectively – escaping the constrictions of modern authoritarian politics. Social resistance has to do with construing a temporary free zone where accepted rules do not apply.⁵⁸ And it is in this sense that, *pace* Riggle, Taylor's bus stops are essentially subversive. The following section discusses differences between street art, graffiti, and public art.

V. STREET ART, GRAFFITI, AND OFFICIAL PUBLIC ART

As mentioned above, one of the positive implications of my definition's explanatory and critical power is the following one: it allows me to effectively address a key philosophical concern about street art – namely, its relationship with similar practices such as official public art and graffiti.⁵⁹ In brief, as a consequence of my account of street art as an art kind that is essentially subversive, I can offer principled reasons for distinguishing this variety of urban art from official public art, while affirming that graffiti is street art's most radical and authentic instantiation. But let me begin with its distinction from official public art.

Street art's subversiveness provides us with a rather straightforward and non-arbitrary criterion to distinguish between street art and official public art. That is, unlike the former, the latter is *not* subversive. In this sense, though official public art is often political, it is so in a way that does not aim at turning upside down social norms regulating visibility in public spaces, as street art does. The goal of official public art is not carnivalesque subversion but may very well range from mere decoration to value commitment statements.⁶⁰

To better qualify the distinction between street art and official public art, let me introduce a distinction that I borrow from Cristina Bicchieri's work on social norms.⁶¹ In talking about actors of social change, she distinguishes between transgressors and trendsetters. Transgressors, Bicchieri suggests, break social taboos in order to signal disdain for 'the norms of the society in which [one] lives'.⁶² However, their

56 Michel Foucault, 'Practicing Criticism', trans. Alan Sheridan, in *Michel Foucault: Politics Philosophy, Culture Interviews and Other Writings 1977–1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 152–56.

57 *Ibid.*, 155.

58 See, among others, Baldini, 'Urban Carnival'; 'Quand les murs'; Harvey, 'Right to the City'; Bey, *T.A.Z.*

59 Philosophical discussions of this relationship can be found in Riggle, 'Street Art'; Bacharach, 'Street Art and Consent'.

60 C. Thi Nguyen, 'Monuments as Commitments: How Art Speaks to Groups and How Groups Think in Art', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 100 (2019): 971–94.

61 Cristina Bicchieri, *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure, and Change Social Norms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

62 *Ibid.*, 83.

disobedience does not aim at offering an alternative order but only at refusing the status quo. Trendsetters, on the other hand, aspire to norm changes. They ‘deviate from an [unjust] established practice’ and want to ‘change the practice for the benefit of the group’.⁶³ So, street art is the outcome of transgressors, whereas official public art is the production of trendsetters. If street artists subvert the distribution of the sensible but have no plan to establish a new regime, public artists have exactly that plan. In other words, street art plays on the destructive side of the spectrum, whereas public art does it on the constructive one.

When considering graffiti, as I have anticipated, I believe that it is street art in its most authentic and radical sense. This claim follows from my discussion of subversiveness. Examples of writing enter with an undiluted rebellious charge into the urban landscape: as Joe Austin also suggests, graffiti just like street art freely appropriate the city’s surfaces, creating an inverted world, where those excluded from expressing themselves in public have their voice heard (**fig. 6**).⁶⁴ It is a matter of fact that works of graffiti are still perceived as highly confrontational, whereas works of street art à la Banksy are increasingly accepted – sometimes even encouraged and protected – in ways that may very well jeopardize their identity as street art.⁶⁵ For this reason I believe that writing is the most authentic and radical expression of street art: graffiti is a maximally subversive example of street art.



Figure 6 Fra32. Photo courtesy of the artist.

In the light of this shared value, I therefore see no good reason – as some suggest – to distinguish between graffiti and street art, which function similarly at the level

63 Ibid., 164, 169.

64 Joe Austin, ‘More to See than a Canvas in a White Cube: For an Art in the Streets’, *City* 14 (2010): 42.

65 Baldini, ‘Beauty and the Behest’, 93–94. It is compatible with my view that street artists may fail to create a subversive artwork. Banksy’s career, for instance, could very well be understood as an attempt at creating subversive art in spite of being a superstar by constantly raising the bar of his artistic interventions. And one might argue that he has failed at least sometimes. On this issue, see Blanché, *Banksy*, chap. 4.

of manipulating public space. However, by considering the popularity of arguments in favour of differentiating between street art and writing, I want to directly address those that are the most common: the sociological, the audience, and the political arguments. When looking at street art as a subversive art kind, the limitations of such arguments clearly manifest themselves.

Let me begin with the *sociological argument*. This appeals to sociological differences about a practitioner's identity for separating street artists and graffiti writers.⁶⁶ It is unclear whether such sociological differences can be actually found in reality.⁶⁷ Writers and street artists often share similar backgrounds, and can come from all walks of life. And, more importantly, insofar as both graffiti writers and street artists tend to operate anonymously, matters related to the author's social identity would in any case have little to no effect on how their works are interpreted.

The *audience argument* appeals to considerations of intended public in order to distinguish between street art and graffiti. According to this view, writing is an esoteric practice, directed only at other writers, whereas street art is exoteric, intended for the general public.⁶⁸ This characterization, however, ignores a simple and yet crucial fact: writers still go a long way to create pieces that everyone can see – and the most visible spots are highly valued among practitioners. One of the intended audiences is certainly the general public: it cannot be otherwise, despite what a writer might admit in an interview. It would be irrational to create something in a public space just to be seen by an esoteric group: this is not how it works! One could certainly concede that insiders would better understand an example of graffiti, or that there is a sense in which writers are a privileged audience. But this cannot exclude in principle that the general public is also one of the audiences of a piece installed in the urban landscape.

Finally, the *political argument* claims that graffiti is *not* political, as street art instead is. In the present context, this is certainly the most relevant objection to my view, which nonetheless resists this criticism. Bacharach offers an influential version of this take on the distinction between street art and graffiti. She argues that writers do not want to convey a social or political message, while being interested only in 'establishing notoriety rather than raising awareness of some socio-political issue'.⁶⁹ And, for this asymmetry in terms of political meaning, graffiti and street art essentially differ.

Bacharach's claim is somewhat surprising, insofar as she identifies as street artists practitioners who claim to be doing graffiti. King Robbo and Banksy are two good examples of that. It is hard to square this choice with her radical Waltonian perspective claiming that artists 'cannot be mistaken about [...] the category to which a work belongs'.⁷⁰ In his books, as well as in his works, Banksy consistently labels what he does as 'graffiti' and King Robbo is a 'king' of graffiti – hence his street name.⁷¹ It is then difficult to see how Bacharach's theoretical distinction then functions in practice.

66 Ronald Kramer, 'Graffiti and Street Art: Creative Practices Amid "Corporatization" and "Corporate Appropriation"', in *Copyright in Street Art and Graffiti: A Country-by-Country Legal Analysis*, ed. Enrico Bonadio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 26–40.

67 Mark Halsey and Alison Young, 'The Meanings of Graffiti and Municipal Administration', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 35 (2002): 171.

68 Ulrich Blanché, 'Street Art and Related Terms – Discussion and Working Definition', *Street Art and Urban Creativity Scientific Journal* 1 (2015): 35; Lewisohn, *Street Art*, 15.

69 Bacharach, 'Street Art and Consent', 483.

70 *Ibid.*, 489.

71 See, for instance, Banksy, *Cut It Out* (n.p.: Banksy, 2014). In that publication, Banksy never uses the term 'street art', just 'graffiti', to talk about their production.

Setting aside matters of general internal consistency of her theory, Bacharach's take on the separation between graffiti and street art seems unconvincing on its own terms. There are several graffiti writers who, on the one hand, explicitly conceptualize their work as tackling social and political issues. This is certainly the case of legendary American couple Utah and Ether, who declared in an interview: 'With our art, we hope to create a dialogue with our audience and to challenge their conventional viewpoints concerning graffiti, whether it's [sic] concepts of public versus private property, or the blurred lines of what constitutes as legal and illegal, etc.'⁷² So, it cannot be the case that Bacharach is referring to differences at the level of explicit intentions.

A possible way of making sense of her position is to interpret it along the following lines: the works of graffiti writers do not convey any explicit political or social message, whereas those of street artists do. And yet, intended as a modal claim, it is obviously false. As mentioned earlier in this paper, much street art that is not graffiti, such as MOMO's *Manhattan Tag* or Etn!k's geometric landscapes, do not express a specific political view. Often, what street artists do can be explained with the words of Invader, another famous practitioner: 'I don't have a message to deliver to the world and I am not openly political. The way I operate is per se already political as I intervene illegally for 99% of my installation.'⁷³ But this description seems to also fit graffiti very well. Actions can be political without explicitly promoting some agenda. And, for this reason, even the political argument appears unsuccessful in vindicating a distinction between street art and graffiti.

In emphasizing that graffiti is one of the styles or subgenres of street art, I am *not* suggesting that this art kind has a unique linear history. There is no grand narrative of street art starting from graffiti writers in the 1960s and going all the way to, for instance, today's yarnbombers or sticker artists. One finds, instead, a plurality of local histories, even when looking at the same subgenres, just like graffiti and its Brazilian version, *pixação*, which emerged independently from the North American school. My theory of street art aims then at offering a reformative but coherent perspective for understanding and interpreting a heterogeneous set of localized subversive practices.

VI. CONCLUSION

What is street art? Street art is subversive art. That is, it is an art kind whose essential value is its subversive value. Subversiveness, as I have also called street art's subversive value, is a capacity to challenge the corporate regime of visibility, that is, those social norms regulating visibility in the modern city, by appropriating public space in carnivalesque ways. Its subversiveness, on the one hand, sets street art apart from official public art, while, on the other hand, placing graffiti at its very core. Thanks to its subversive value, street art functions as a practice of resistance, in particular against the commodification of public space, which is a dominant trend in the neo-liberal city. Street art turns the urban landscape into contested space, while reclaiming urban visible surfaces for free expression. It is not merely a way to bring art in public spaces. It is rather a creative attempt to reclaim the city – even if only temporarily.

72 Zio, 'Exclusive Interview with Utah & Ether, Graffiti's Bonnie & Clyde', *The Hundreds* (blog), 5 June 2015, <http://thehundreds.com/blog/utah-ether-interview>.

73 'Invader – About', <http://www.space-invaders.com/about>.

I would like to thank Matteo Ravasio for his comments and two anonymous reviewers for their insightful suggestions and careful reading of the manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

REFERENCES

- Andrzejewski, Adam. 'Authenticity Manifested: Street Art and Artification.' *Rivista di Estetica* 64 (2017): 167–84. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/estetica.2077>
- Austin, Joe. 'More to See than a Canvas in a White Cube: For an Art in the Streets.' *City* 14 (2010): 33–47. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810903529142>
- Bacharach, Sondra. 'Finding Your Voice in the Streets: Street Art and Epistemic Injustice.' *Monist* 101 (2018): 31–43. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/monist/onx033>
- , 'Street Art and Consent.' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 55 (2015): 481–95. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayv030>
- Baker, Laura E. 'Public Sites versus Public Sights: The Progressive Response to Outdoor Advertising and the Commercialization of Public Space.' *American Quarterly* 59 (2007): 1187–1213. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2007.0077>
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984.
- Baldini, Andrea. 'Beauty and the Behest: Distinguishing Legal Judgment and Aesthetic Judgment in the Context of 21st Century Street Art and Graffiti.' *Rivista di Estetica* 65 (2017): 91–106. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/estetica.2161>
- , 'Dangerous Liaisons: Graffiti in Da Museum.' In *Un(Authorized) / Commissioned*, by Pietro Rivasi and Andrea Baldini, 26–32. Rome: WholeTrain, 2017.
- , *A Philosophy Guide to Street Art and the Law*. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- , 'Quand les murs de béton muets se transforment en un carnaval de couleur: Le street art comme stratégie de résistance sociale contre le modèle commercial de la visibilité.' *Cahiers de narratologie* 30 (2016). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/narratologie.7469>
- , 'Street Art: A Reply to Riggle.' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74 (2016): 187–91. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12261>
- , 'Street Art, Decorum, and the Politics of Urban Aesthetics.' In 'Urban Aesthetics', edited by Sanna Lehtinen, special vol. 8, *Contemporary Aesthetics* (2020). <https://contempaesthetics.org/2020/07/16/street-art-decorum-and-the-politics-of-urban-aesthetics/>.
- , 'An Urban Carnival on the City Walls: The Visual Representation of Financial Power in European Street Art.' *Journal of Visual Culture* 14 (2015): 246–52. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412915592883>
- Baldini, Andrea, and Pamela Pietrucci. 'Knitting a Community Back Together: Spontaneous Public Art as Citizenship Engagement in Post-Earthquake L'Aquila.' In *Performative Citizenship: Public Art, Urban Design, and Political Participation*, edited by Luigi Musarò and Laura Iannelli, 115–32. Milan: Mimesis International, 2017.
- Banerjee, Tridib. 'The Future of Public Space: Beyond Invented Streets and Reinvented Places.' *Journal of the American Planning Association* 67 (2001): 9–24. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360108976352>
- Banksy. *Cut It Out*. N.p.: Banksy, 2004.

- Bartolomeus, Leonard. 'Street Art in Indonesian Social and Political Life.' *Guggenheim Blogs* (blog), 17 October 2012. <http://blogs.guggenheim.org/map/street-art-in-indonesian-social-and-political-life>.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9904>
- Bengtson, Peter. 'Beyond the Public Art Machine: A Critical Examination of Street Art as Public Art.' *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift / Journal of Art History* 82 (2013): 63–80. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00233609.2012.762804>
- '. 'Carelessness or Curatorial Chutzpah? On Controversies Surrounding Street Art in the Museum.' *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift / Journal of Art History* 84 (2015): 220–33. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00233609.2015.1095797>
- '. *The Street Art World*. Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2014.
- Bey, Hakim. *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991).
- Bicchieri, Cristina. *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure, and Change Social Norms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190622046.001.0001>
- Blanché, Ulrich. *Banksy: Urban Art in a Material World*. Marburg: Tectum, 2016.
- '. 'Qu'est-ce que le street art ? Essai et discussion des définitions.' *Cahiers de Narratologie* 29 (2015). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/narratologie.7397>
- '. 'Street Art and Related Terms – Discussion and Working Definition.' *Street Art and Urban Creativity Scientific Journal* 1 (2015): 32–39.
- Bruno Hannibal-Taylor. *Playful Spaces*. Video, 3:35. 3 April 2008. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDqbb0eHVXA>.
- 'Bruno Taylor's Playful Spaces.' *Apartment Therapy*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20120115204114/https://www.apartmenttherapy.com/bruno-taylors-playful-spaces-62134>.
- Certeau, Michel de. *Culture in the Plural*. Translated by Tom Conley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Chackal, Tony. 'Of Materiality and Meaning: The Illegality Condition in Street Art.' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74 (2016): 359–70. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12325>
- Confino, Jo. "'Fake Street Art Sucks": Perrier Replaces Williamsburg's Nelson Mandela Mural.' *Guardian*, 26 September 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/sep/26/fake-street-art-sucks-perrier-replaces-williamsburgs-nelson-mandela-mural-with-huge-advertisement>.
- Danzysz, Magda. *From Style Writing to Art: A Street Art Anthology*. Rome: DRAGO, 2010.
- Foucault, Michel. 'Practicing Criticism.' Translated by Alan Sheridan. In *Michel Foucault: Politics Philosophy, Culture Interviews and Other Writings 1977–1984*, edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, 152–56. New York: Routledge, 1988.
- Genin, Christophe. *Le street art au tournant: Reconnaissances d'un genre*. Brussels: Les Impressions nouvelles, 2013.
- Goede, Marieke de. 'Carnival of Money: Politics of Dissent in an Era of Globalizing Finance.' In *The Global Resistance Reader*, edited by Louise Amoore, 379–91. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Halsey, Mark, and Alison Young. 'The Meanings of Graffiti and Municipal Administration.' *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 35 (2002): 165–86. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1375/acri.35.2.165>
- Hamdy, Basma, and Don Karl. *Walls of Freedom: Street Art of The Egyptian Revolution*. Berlin: From Here to Fame, 2014.
- Harvey, David. 'The Right to the City.' *New Left Review*, no. 53 (2008): 23–40.

- 'Invader – About.' <http://www.space-invaders.com/about>.
- Irvine, Martin. 'The Work on the Street: Street Art and Visual Culture.' In *The Handbook of Visual Culture*, edited by Ian Heywood, Barry Sandywell, Michael Gardiner, Gunalan Nadarajan, and Catherine M. Soussloff, 235–78. London: Berg, 2012.
- Iveson, Kurt. 'Branded Cities: Outdoor Advertising, Urban Governance, and the Outdoor Media Landscape.' *Antipode* 44 (2012): 151–74. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2011.00849.x>
- Jackson, Kenneth T. 'All the World's a Mall: Reflections on the Social and Economic Consequences of the American Shopping Center.' *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 1111–21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2169636>
- Kester, Grant. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Kohn, Margaret. *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space*. New York: Routledge, 2004. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203495117>
- Kramer, Ronald. 'Graffiti and Street Art: Creative Practices amid "Corporatization" and "Corporate Appropriation".' In *Copyright in Street Art and Graffiti: A Country-by-Country Legal Analysis*, edited by Enrico Bonadio, 26–40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108563581.003>
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Urban Revolution*. Translated by Robert Bononno. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 2003.
- . *Writings on Cities*. Edited and translated by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996.
- Leorke, Dale. 'The Struggle to Reclaim the City: An Interview With Michael Sorkin.' *Space and Culture* 18 (2015): 98–105. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331213512052>
- Lewisohn, Cedar. *Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution*. New York: Abrams, 2008.
- Lopes, Dominic McIver. *Beyond Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- . *A Philosophy of Computer Art*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Low, Setha M., and Neil Smith, eds. *The Politics of Public Space*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Mattelart, Armand. *Advertising International: The Privatization of Public Space*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Mitchell, Don. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York: Guilford, 2003.
- Moser, Shelby. 'Artist Sanction and Street Works.' *Visual Inquiry* 7 (2018): 19–27. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/vi.7.1.19_1
- Nguyen, C. Thi. 'Monuments as Commitments: How Art Speaks to Groups and How Groups Think in Art.' *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 100 (2019): 971–94. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/papq.12279>
- Oldenburg, Ray. *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 1999.
- Pan, Lu. 'Who Is Occupying Wall and Street: Graffiti and Urban Spatial Politics in Contemporary China.' *Continuum* 28 (2014): 136–53. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2013.854867>
- Pan, Lu. 'Writing at the End of History: Reflections on Two Cases of Graffiti in Hong Kong.' *Public Art Dialogue* 4 (2014): 147–66. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21502552.2014.878487>
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Translated by Gabriel Lockhill. London: Continuum, 2004.
- Riggle, Nicholas. 'Street Art: The Transfiguration of the Commonplaces.' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68 (2010): 243–57.

- , 'Using the Street for Art: A Reply to Baldini.' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74 (2016): 191–95. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12280>
- ryanbyrne123. 'Political Street Art and Protest.' *Street Art in Cape Town* (blog), 23 March 2015. <https://wallsofcapestown.wordpress.com/2015/03/23/political-street-art-and-protest>.
- Sennett, Richard. *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: Norton, 1992.
- Simoes, Patricia. 'Vespa Ads Not Cool.' *Spacing Toronto* (blog), 30 April 2008. <http://spacing.ca/toronto/2008/04/30/vespa-ads-not-cool>.
- Sorkin, Michael, ed. *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992.
- Thibault, Ally. 'Beijing's Thriving Graffiti Culture May Surprise You.' *The World*, 21 April 2014. <https://theworld.org/stories/2014-04-21/beijings-thriving-graffiti-culture-may-surprise-you>.
- Tunali, Tijen. 'The Art of Resistance: Carnival Aesthetics and the Gezi Street Protests.' *ASAP/Journal* 3 (2018): 377–99. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/asa.2018.0031>
- Valjakka, Minna. 'Graffiti in China – Chinese Graffiti?' *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (2011): 61–91. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v29i1.4021>
- Vartanian, Hrag. 'Street Art Politics & Commercialization...How Far Is Too Far?' *Hyperallergic*. 25 February 2010. <http://hyperallergic.com/3415/street-art-politics-commercialization>.
- Volodzko, David. 'Graffiti in China, Part Two: The Writing on the Wall.' *Diplomat*, 27 May 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/graffiti-in-china-part-two-the-writing-on-the-wall>.
- Walker, Rob. 'Vespa Marketing Inspires Fauxreel Backlash?' *Marketing* (blog), 16 June 2008. <http://www.marketing.com/journal/?p=1310>.
- Weaver, Timothy. 'The Privatization of Public Space: The New Enclosures.' SSRN research paper, 21 August 2014. <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2454138>.
- 'Bruno Taylor's Playful Spaces.' *Wooster Collective*, 18 August 2008. <http://www.woostercollective.com/post/bruno-taylors-playful-spaces>.
- Wymer, Walter. 'Rethinking the Boundaries of Social Marketing: Activism or Advertising?' *Journal of Business Research* 63 (2010): 99–103. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2009.02.003>
- Young, Alison. *Street Art, Public City: Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination*. New York: Routledge, 2014. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203796917>
- Zangwill, Nick. 'Groundrules in the Philosophy of Art.' *Philosophy* 70 (1995): 533–44. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819100065785>
- Zio. 'Exclusive Interview with Utah & Ether, Graffiti's Bonnie & Clyde.' *The Hundreds* (blog), 5 June 2015. <http://thehundreds.com/blog/utah-ether-interview>.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Baldini, Andrea Lorenzo. 'What Is Street Art?' *Estetika: The European Journal of Aesthetics* LIX/XV, no. 1 (2022): pp. 1–21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33134/eeja.234>

Submitted: 8 October 2020

Accepted: 5 May 2021

Published: 15 March 2022

COPYRIGHT:

© 2022 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Estetika: The European Journal of Aesthetics is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Helsinki University Press in cooperation with the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague.