From Marx to Merkel
Political muralism and street art in Lisbon

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Introduction

Lisbon, the Portuguese capital, is a relatively small city when compared to most of the other ones included in this collection. This city spreads over an area of 84 km², and its population of approximately 548,000 inhabitants has been steadily decreasing over the last years, in contrast with the demographic growth in the surrounding areas. The Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) is comprised of eighteen municipalities and accommodates over three million people. Thus, it would be misleading to focus strictly on the city of Lisbon, forgetting the vast network of interconnected localities within which it exists, and the hundreds of thousands of people that pass through them on a daily basis.

Therefore, a discussion of graffiti in Lisbon should inevitably be more concerned with understanding the elements of mobility and interconnection between districts than with determining fixed geographical territories and boundaries. The graffiti found in Lisbon is nourished by a creative energy that transcends its physical borders, since most writers and crews acting in the city originally come from neighboring areas. In fact, graffiti crews frequently consist of writers living in different districts.

I have studied graffiti in the LMA for the last decade. My research began in 2004, when I started my PhD in Anthropology. Since then I have witnessed great transformations in this field of activity, especially regarding public representations of this phenomenon, as reflected in the portrayals conveyed by the media and public entities. However, this chapter does not intend to focus exclusively on the North American-inspired graffiti made in Lisbon during this period. I decided upon an approach that seeks to emphasize the distinctive aspects of the different informal pictorial expressions that have marked mural painting (both legal and illegal) in Lisbon over the last decades, and which ultimately are responsible for establishing a unique historical and symbolical heritage. Lisbon’s informal and vernacular mural art bears specific traits that deserve being singled out. This chapter describes the historical evolution of these expressions in Lisbon, analyzing the social, cultural, and urban impact of these changes.

Before the emergence of North American-inspired graffiti, the post-revolutionary period of the 1970s in Lisbon was marked by the appropriation of the public wall to support group paintings
with a strong political and ideological element. The disappearance of this form of artistic expression in a way coincided with its replacement by graffiti, a transnational visual language that asserted itself during the decade of 1990 and has remained part of the urban landscape ever since. These visual expressions were visible not only on the city walls, but also on trains and subway carriages. The spread of illegal graffiti in the 2000s slowly generated a public reaction of displeasure, particularly as a consequence of the street bombing in Lisbon’s central and historical districts. This form of expression was considered as a kind of urban blight. Subsequently, the city council adopted a more restrictive policy, launching a graffiti removal program that exerted an overall increased control over graffiti.

In recent years, two phenomena are noteworthy. On the one hand, the non-sanctioned, unofficial political mural produced by graffiti-writers and street artists has emerged as a result of the severe economic and social crisis affecting Portugal. While the last couple of decades were characterized by the explosion of a kind of artistic language that was in no way linked to our muralist history, the severe economic and social crisis of the last few years has favored a mild resurgence of the somewhat forgotten political murals. The most curious thing is that these new samples somehow combine elements of both periods, insofar as being political in content, and thus recovering the legacy of the 1970 decade, they are mostly made by artists connected to the graffiti community. On the other hand, we have recently witnessed the official acclamation and legitimation of many Portuguese street artists, promoted by public entities, cultural entrepreneurs, museums, and art dealers. In recent years Lisbon city council has decided to support various street art initiatives, which is bound to place the city among the main street art production sites in Europe.

Marx on the wall

For most of the twentieth century, Portuguese political life was constrained by a dictatorship that lasted nearly five decades and left an indelible mark on Portuguese society and its political dynamics. The Salazarist regime took over in 1933 and remained in power until the “carnation revolution” on April 25, 1974. This event was the culmination of the regime’s gradual process of deterioration and the growing dissatisfaction felt by a majority confronted, among other things, with a colonial war that seemed both endless and helplessly lost. This colonial conflict, fought on several fronts of the so-called “ultramarine provinces” (Angola, Guiné-Bissau, and Mozambique), consumed enormous financial and human resources, including forcing thousands of young Portuguese men to war.

Following the political repression, censorship, and persecution of the Salazarist government, the April revolution (1974) and the institution of a democratic regime gave way to a short period of instability marked by extreme political activity. The streets were a witness to this political vitality. During this time, public demonstrations, organized by the different political parties, occurred on the streets, and the streets served as a background for the various forms of political propaganda developed during that time. The city walls played a very significant role in these events. The walls became one of the main devices of political communication, and were used by both right and left wing parties, although predominantly by the latter. During this period, the Portuguese left was fragmented into several parties of varying scope, and almost all of them used mural painting as a channel of political and ideological communication.

The iconography used in these forms of propaganda alluded to revolution and to the existing ideological context, inspired by the prevalent socialist ideals at the time. Marx, Lenin, and Mao were familiar faces often displayed along with other figures representing social or professional groups, such as the people, the proletariat, or the peasantry (see Figures 23.1–23.3). These murals
Figure 23.1 MES mural © Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, Colecção Neves Águas

Figure 23.2 UDP mural © Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, Colecção Neves Águas
were generally group works that were often executed with the aid of artists. While many of these murals were relatively complex and well-structured compositions from a formal point of view, in some cases the works displayed a naïf and vernacular character. For over a decade, these works were a present feature of Lisbon’s cityscape. However, the murals have gradually disappeared due to the official entities’ inability to comprehend their historical and cultural value. The lack of any effort to preserve these works has nevertheless not prevented them from remaining in the collective imagination and memory of all those inhabitants of Lisbon who were fortunate enough to witness their existence.

**Winds of modernity: MTV, hip-hop, and spray-can art**

After four decades of an isolationism that was actively sought by the old regime, entrance into the European Economic Community in the decade of 1980, and the subsequent economic growth it brought, helped to transform Portuguese society, especially in major urban centers that were naturally more cosmopolitan and open. The increasing consumer spending power was accompanied by a growing interest in North-American popular culture propagated through cultural...
industries. The icons of Anglo-Saxon popular culture, particularly those of North-American origin, gradually occupied center stage in the imagination of Portuguese youth. This generation grew up watching American MTV and blockbuster movies. In an increasingly globalized world, Lisbon youth cultures of that period imitated the same groups found elsewhere (i.e. punks, goths, headbangers, skinheads, rappers, etc.). The initial graffiti in Portugal emerged in the wake of these economic and cultural shifts, introduced by a hip-hop culture that was taking its first steps.

The first expressions of a hip-hop culture created and developed in Portugal appear at the beginning of the 1990s decade, as a consequence of the globalization that spread this cultural movement beyond the North-American borders (Fradique, 2001; Simões et al., 2005). Rap is probably the most visible manifestation of a movement that expanded in Portugal during that period. Graffiti came into the scene of the greater Lisbon area in the Oeiras district (Moore, 2010). One of the first crews to appear around this area was the Criminal Assassins Crews (CAC)—and included the writers Mistik, Spin, Safari, and Gizmo. Another important crew to emerge a few years later was known as Paint Rackin Mafia (PRM), formed by Wize, Kase, Saxe, Youth, and afterwards Lis One (Mosaik). In the mid–1990s, graffiti had already spread through various LMA districts, but mainly in three main areas: Cascais, Sintra, and South Bank (Moore, 2010). Besides the names mentioned above, other important writers from this period include Yssuk, Dojo, Uber, Mind, Ster, Prat, Hedo, Opse, Hope, Play, Spot, Eith, Sin, Cab, Revolt, Darko, Resh, Roket, Tape, Time, Dose (Byzar), Seux, Rote, Art, Kreyz. The graffiti from this period is mostly a replication of the North-America tradition (Campos, 2010). First, it reproduces the methods, techniques, and imagery, and second it perpetuates the values, modes of action, and vocabulary of North-American graffiti.

We find a combination of the “ludic” dimension (Campos, 2010, 2013b) with the sense of risk, competitiveness, and adrenalin. It is an activity driven by the search for status among peers, obtained by means of a risky and illegal practice: tag dissemination. This community is constituted by youths acting, as McDonald (2011) proposes, with an aim to develop a “moral career.” Such a career is built on the basis of the quantity and quality of the works produced. However, a practical and symbolical distinction is established between two graffiti genres. For these writers, graffiti is divided into the legal and illegal kind. The former involves legal or semi-legal mural paintings, more complex from the pictorial construction point of view, generally known as Hall of Fame. The later implies “bombing” actions, such as tagging and throw ups. Despite the dichotomy in this field, the LMA writer community actually presents us with a wide variety of attitudes, since we find those adopting both modes of action, while others concentrate uniquely on one of those fields. Certain crews specialize in particular forms of action, mastering the execution of graffiti on trains in a given train line, for example, or developing artistic graffiti styles bearing a distinctive pictorial language.

Some events organized during this period not only show that the dissemination process was in significant expansion, but also give the first indication that the more aestheticized trend of graffiti was attracting admirers from outside the community, and was starting to be acknowledged as culturally valid by public entities such as local councils. Despite the hesitant start, by the end of the decade, the graffiti writer’s community was vibrant, diversified, and dynamic.

From vandalism to “artification”

The end of the 1990s and the beginning of 2000s are marked by an explosion of illegal graffiti and the multiplying of writers and crews working in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. Connected to the proliferation of graffiti is the fact that this phenomenon never featured in the national
or local political agenda. In other words, albeit its negative public representations (conveyed for instance in the media), the phenomenon did not draw enough political attention so as to generate the enforcement of integrated policies to fight or contain graffiti. Therefore, unlike in other countries, there were no public “demonization” campaigns portraying graffiti as a public and urban hazard. The relative tolerance of this movement by authorities created the conditions for the burgeoning of a very active community that spread throughout the LMA in the period of a decade.

During this time, the number of writers increased and the competition among them was substantially intensified, leading to the creation of well-defined territories (both geographical and stylistic). Train lines were dominated by different crews, which protected their sphere of action, sometimes triggering conflicts between writers and crews regarding the negotiation of borders (Campos, 2010). Even though train painting is symbolically an important field of expertise for a writer, given its dangerous nature, it is not unanimously practiced. Besides the physical risks involved in missions targeting trains, this kind of action is also subject to close surveillance by police authorities and private security systems. The subway network, due to its reduced public visibility and the high degree of difficulty in execution, is even less targeted by graffiti writers. However, train and subway painting are considerably significant from the symbolical point of view, and are crucial towards establishing reputation and prestige among LMA graffiti writers.21

Unlike the more limited train-bombing, street-bombing spread throughout Lisbon’s cityscape, finding several hot spots, such as the Bairro Alto district.22

This was also the period during which some of the most relevant LMA writers (e.g. Mosaik, Odeith, Nomen, Ram, etc.) built a name for themselves. The result is an increasing number of complex walls of fame executed by the best writers from this time. The first cases of commissioned work also date back to this period and with them the vague hope of a professional career for some writers. The existence of private and public commissions, combined with the visibility gained by some of these murals and the consolidation of a circuit of regular festivals,23 are indicators of a shift, not just within this specific cultural field, but also in the social representations that it projected.

Therefore, the twentieth century ends with the unmistakable signs of a new outlook on graffiti, in terms of the reassessment of its cultural and aesthetic value. I believe that this period marks the beginning of a phase that involved the questioning of graffiti and its boundaries. New conceptions of informal, illegal, and non-commissioned aesthetic expressions, such as “post-graffiti” and “street art,” also gained increasing prominence during this period, seeming to hint that the “old graffiti” was changing. In other words, the distinguishing lines between “art” and “vandalism,” “legal” and “illegal,” become blurred. The so-called “artistic graffiti”24 comes gradually closer to legitimate artistic forms. There are a few factors that can be identified as justifying such a change. First, we have what we might call endogenous reasons. From these, on one hand, the growing number of actors in an increasingly competitive field, which in turn led some to specialize in artistic graffiti and obtain prominence in that area; and on the other hand, the gradual opening up of the field, and what it implied in terms of a certain degree of “miscegenation” between graffiti and other forms of expression.25 However, there are other exogenous factors that should be noted. During the 2000s, there was a growing interest worldwide in graffiti and other so-called urban art forms (e.g. stickers, stencils, posters, etc.). International media gave increasing coverage to artists, whose works thus obtained public recognition and legitimacy within the art world, including its market. The significance of this phenomenon extends to the growing number of books and publications that seek to portray graffiti and urban art as legitimate artistic forms (Manco, 2002, 2004; Ganz, 2004; Bou, 2005; Lazarides, 2008; Stahl, 2009). It’s actually remarkable that the sections dedicated to graffiti and
urban art nowadays found in major bookstores are usually next to the art and design sections. All of these endogenous and exogenous circumstances had an impact on national media, which started to portray graffiti and street artists in a different light.

If on the one hand graffiti and street art is a global phenomenon, as demonstrated by the celebration of a number of street artists by some of the most renowned artistic institutions worldwide (e.g. Foundation Cartier, Tate Modern, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Centro Cultural de Belem, etc.), on the other hand some local characteristics derive from the particular dynamics of individual cities. Lisbon provides an especially interesting case study in this respect. The opening of the first Urban Art Gallery (GAU) and the Crono project are two relevant examples, for what they represent in terms of reassessing the role played by urban art within this city.

The GAU is the first example of a project that gave integrated and consistent support to urban art in Lisbon (Câmara, 2014). Curiously, its birth was deeply connected to a set of political measures taken by the local authorities with the aim of fighting graffiti in Lisbon’s historical districts (Campos, 2009). As compensation for a plan to control and erase graffiti from the city’s historical center (Bairro Alto), in 2008 the city council (CML) created the capital’s first Urban Art Gallery in a public space (see Figures 23.4 and 23.5). To that end, the CML invited a number of artists and graffiti writers. The gallery is still active and organizes an annual exhibition featuring a guest artist together with a selection of artistic projects chosen by a jury that is appointed by the city council. The GAU project has diversified its activity, most notably through its urban art inventory project. This survey is extremely significant insofar as it reveals public recognition on the part of official entities of the artistic and cultural relevance of the different forms of non-institutional graffiti and urban art found in the city of Lisbon. Meanwhile, throughout the last

![Urban art gallery, artists Pedro Zamith and Vanessa Teodoro](https://example.com/image.jpg)
years, the GAU has been supporting several other projects and strengthening the bonds with
the local artistic community (including both graffiti writers and street artists).

In its turn, the Crono project, which took place between 2010 and 2011 with the support
of the city council, was among the most significant events due to its pioneering way of giving
a new perspective to urban art in Lisbon. This effort, organized by Alexandre Farto – Vhils,
Pedro Neves – Uber (both actively involved in the graffiti scene for many years) and Angelo
Milano, sought to bring to Lisbon some of the most prominent international names in street
art to produce large scale works in the facades of several buildings (see Figures 23.6 and 23.7).
The list of invited artists included names such as Blu, Os Gêmeos, Sam3, Ericailcane, Lucy
McLauchlan, Brad Downy, Momo, Arm Collective, etc.

The proliferation of artistic achievements resulting from this support for legal and
commissioned forms of intervention, brought an unexpected visibility to Lisbon, attracting the
attention of some international media. For that reason, similarly to what has been occurring
elsewhere, graffiti in Lisbon has undergone a process of “artification.” According to Shapiro:

Artification designates the transformation of non-art into art. It emerges from a complex
effort that produces change in the definition and status of people, of objects and activities.
Far from corresponding to merely symbolic changes . . . artification rests on very concrete
foundations . . . Thus artification is the resultant force of a combination of processes – practical
and symbolic, organizational and discursive – by which people agree to identify an object
or an activity as art.

(2013: pp. 20–21)
Figure 23.6 Crono project, artist Ericailcane © Ricardo Campos

Figure 23.7 Crono project, artist Sam3 © Ricardo Campos
Figure 23.8 Underdogs project, artists How and Nosm © José Vicente | DPC | CML 2013

Figure 23.9 Underdogs project, artists VHILS and Pixel Pancho © José Vicente | DPC | CML 2013
Artification was followed by the “commodification” of graffiti, now also perceived as a decorative art that could be used in projects of urban regeneration or embellishment. The development of this economic niche has provided a livelihood and a certain degree of professionalization for some graffiti writers and street artists, who develop their street work while continuing to invest in a more conventional artistic career. Therefore, major spray painted murals or other commissioned street artworks are currently promoted in Lisbon, and are clearly validated as a legitimate form of public art. This has been possible thanks to the valuable contribution of several privately funded events and citizen initiatives, among which projects such as the Ephemeral Museum, Dedicated, Underdogs, or Wool deserve to be singled out. This proliferation of initiatives reflects not only this field’s vitality, its creativity, and strong international connections, but also a clear position on the part of local policies for the promotion of these urban forms of expression. The fact that it has become a political option over the last years has had strong impact on Lisbon’s urban network and visual cityscape.

The economic dimension cannot be ignored either, especially when we realize that these art forms have merited the attention of international media, thus promoting the city and its tourism. This phenomenon is equally present in local business enterprises that exploit this patrimony, such as some touristic tours created in recent years by small businesses or individuals with connections to this field.

The politicization of graffiti in times of crisis

Recent years, marked by the deep economic crisis and growing discredit of the political elite in Portugal, have witnessed the reemergence of political murals. The Portuguese government’s request for international economic assistance in 2011, and the arrival of the international team of advisors appointed to oversee the implementation of the program, also known as the Troika (a term that alluded to the three organizations involved in the process: IMF, ECB, and EC), lead to severe austerity policies that resulted in the dramatic growth of unemployment rates and salary cut downs affecting most of the population. This context prompted the rise of several popular demonstrations and protest movements, to a great extent inspired by similar phenomena in other European countries, in the wake of the international financial crisis. The transnational movement “Occupy,” the Spanish “Indignados” movement, and the vigorous demonstrations witnessed in Greece, were also reflected in the Portuguese context. One of the largest demonstrations ever seen, occurred in 2012, and curiously was not organized by political parties or union movements, but by a citizens association that, not accidentally, went by the name of “Damn the Troika.” Such an atmosphere of strong civil mobilization and political protest seems to have encouraged the mild resurgence of mural art forms of a political nature.

Despite not bearing the same weight on the urban landscape as it did during the 1970s and 1980s, this format of visual communication is noteworthy for the symbolical role it has played. The murals and street art projects that have been cropping up are completely different from the works produced in the post-revolutionary period. To begin with, the first major difference has to do with the setting and authorship. While the post-revolutionary mural was produced within the framework of political party propaganda and evidenced a clear ideological connection, the current version is completely different. These political demonstrations are generally illegal and are generated outside the sphere of the political parties, by isolated individuals or groups that are not involved in the political life. This is a new phenomenon, and the acute crisis seems to have created the need for political involvement as the expression of an active citizenship. A number of murals that are characterized by their criticism of the current situation and a satirical portrayal of the political elite, especially those political parties that have governed Portugal over the last decades, started to appear in the Lisbon area (see Figures 23.10–23.12). These forms of
Figure 23.10 German chancellor Angela Merkel with the Portuguese PM and the minister of foreign affairs

Figure 23.11 “The law of the strongest” – depicting current Portuguese PM, Pedro Passos Coelho
expression belong to a long tradition of unauthorized and transgressive manifestations of a vernacular nature, which aim to strike against power (and its representatives) and resort to satire and slander as communicational formats (Balandier, 1980). The return of this kind of work indicates that the streets and its walls, despite being politically dormant during times of relative political appeasement and socio-economic well-being, continue to be a privileged backdrop for symbolical confrontations. They are the media, par excellence, for civil demonstrations, and particularly for those who have no access to other channels of communication and political expression.

Conclusion

In the post-revolutionary period following the Carnation Revolution of 1974, Lisbon city walls became the repository for numerous political murals painted by a wide variety of political parties, particularly of the left wing persuasion. At the time, mural painting, using Marxist and Maoist iconography, was a socially accepted way of political communication, and dominant throughout the urban visual landscape. These murals slowly vanished, giving way to American-inspired graffiti. Driven by a globalized hip-hop culture, particularly present in the media, tags, throw-ups, and masterpieces, gradually acquired a significant place in the Lisbon metropolitan area.

The first examples of graffiti in the Lisbon metropolitan area appeared almost two decades after their emergence in the U.S.A. This phenomenon’s feeble beginning during the last decade of the twentieth century gave way to a boom of graffiti in the first decades of the twenty-first century, a fact which can be explained by the absence of strict anti-graffiti laws on the part of authorities. As a matter of fact, despite the condemnation of these practices in public discourse (in the media and among the political elite), described as acts of vandalism, an integrated plan to fight the phenomenon was never put in place. In its absence, the number of young people joining this world multiplied, as so did the crews acting in the Lisbon metropolitan area.
This situation set the foundations for the development of a strong community, with a creative and well sustained dynamic.

The first attempt at developing a policy of graffiti abatement and cleaning was enforced in one of Lisbon’s most legendary historical districts, the Bairro Alto. The plan, which was started in 2008, also became a historical benchmark for the Lisbon graffiti and street art movement, insofar as it started the development of a strong policy of commissioned urban art. This institutional encouragement to urban art constituted a turning point in the way graffiti-writers and their works were considered from then on. The condemnation of illegal graffiti is accompanied by an increasing public taste for the so-called “artistic graffiti” (legal or semi-legal), present in murals of extreme chromatic and figurative complexity. Many of these graffiti-writers are elevated to the category of artists, legitimated by the media, the art market and official institutions.

Many writers from the initial generation continue to be fairly active (e.g. Nomen, Odeith, etc.), but other names have established a reputation since (e.g. Ram, Vhils, Mais Menos, Smile, Pariz, Aka, Corleone, Add Fuel, Paulo Arraiano, Mais Menos, etc.), some of whom made their entrance into the street art world from other artistic fields (e.g. Kruela or Paulo Arraiano).

We are currently witnessing a process of “artification” of graffiti and the less transgressive urban art forms, which involves both a legitimation of these artistic languages and their authors, and a promotion of their works. Thus, the recognition of aesthetic value is followed by the cultural, urban, and economic value that this kind of work can bring to the city. In this way, certain forms of urban art become connected to processes of urban rehabilitation and gentrification in a number of Lisbon districts, through public strategies of urban embellishment promoted by local councils. Contrast with this commodification of urban art, we find the persistence of certain niches that can be described as belonging to the world of “transgressive aesthetics” (Campos, 2013a), involving forms of dissidence (political, ideological, etc.) or transgression (illegal use of city space for tag dissemination). In recent years, the emergence of examples of political mural art that revive the memory of the revolutionary muralist tradition, which marked Lisbon’s walls during the decades of 1970–1980 has occurred. The economic and social crisis that has been felt shows that, in times of social unrest, the streets and the walls continue to be a haven for popular expression and protest.

In sum, urban art in Lisbon over the last years is distinguished for its great vitality and diversity. If on the one hand, a universe strongly linked to a more “purist” graffiti of the North American tradition continues to exist, on the other hand, a more hybrid artistic field, legitimated and supported by different instances, has also developed. These two spheres are not antagonistic, quite on the contrary. They are closely linked, making it sometimes hard to include a work within rigid boundaries, since the limits that distinguish graffiti from urban art and public art are increasingly permeable and brought into question.

Notes

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2 According to information from the 2011 census (National Statistical Institute).

3 According to the 2011 census, between 2001 and 2011 Lisbon lost approximately 17 thousand inhabitants (National Statistical Institute).

4 Authoritarian regime headed by António de Oliveira Salazar, also known as “Estado Novo” (New State).

5 Revolution carried out by junior military officers. This revolution occurred with almost no bloodshed, since there was little resistance from the power in place or the military who remained faithful. The
military that rebelled were received with carnations by the people of Lisbon, thus the name “carnation revolution.”

6 In fact, Salazar stepped down from power in 1968, but the so-called “New State” lasted until 1974 under the leadership of Marcelo Caetano, who succeeded Salazar during this last period.

7 War lasted between 1961 and 1974.

8 Before the revolution, walls were also occasionally used to voice political watchwords and slogans, through writings that were severely punished by the political police of the time.

9 The relevance of the political mural dates back to the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, and was equally important during both the Mexican revolution and the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

10 One particular characteristic of these murals was that they were mostly executed by ordinary citizens, party militants with no artistic training. The murals were usually executed collectively, by groups of political militants with diverse artistic skills.

11 Today there’s a strong consensus about the relevance played by these murals, not only due to their historical significance, but also their cultural and aesthetical singularity. Official entities, academic elites and the art world view these extinct murals as examples of “popular art” produced during a specific period of our history. A clear example of their importance was the recently promoted action “40 anos, 40 murais” (40 years, 40 murals) on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the carnation revolution celebration (April 2014). This action consisted in the production of 40 murals that revived the memory, iconography and style of the old murals. Some of these paintings were faithful reproductions of famous murals while others were original works.

12 Corresponding, for example, to a great influx of immigration, mainly from Portuguese-speaking African countries during the decade of 1980.

13 Even though breakdance became fairly popular during this period, with the existence of competitions and projection in the media.

14 More precisely in the area of Carcavelos. The emergence of graffiti appears to be linked to the presence of foreigners passing through Portugal responsible for transmitting this practice, as in the case of the writer of French origin Kazar, who painted in this area between 1988 and 1989 (Moore, 2010; Grácio et al., 2004).

15 In 1994, an interview with some writers from this crew for the Portuguese music journal Blitz, brought great national visibility to graffiti, which was clearly in expansion. Between 1997 and 1998 two journals specialized in graffiti are created, D’Outros Tipos in 1997 and Filthy in 1998, reflecting the growth of this community and the potential audience for this kind of subject matter.

16 All of them in the Lisbon Suburban area.

17 A career based on social value and prestige, without any kind of economic or professional compensation.

18 The formal “legality” of the act is not especially relevant in this case, given that this classification applies to the execution of murals in authorized sites (either expressly authorized by the rightful owner, or in its absence, at least socially tolerated).

19 Gallery exhibitions and graffiti shows.

20 That is the case of the “Graffiti Oeiras” competition, which started in 1994, or of the “First International Graffiti Festival” occurred in 1999, both organized by the Oeiras Town Hall. The former became a referential event, bringing together members of this community every year.

21 Two factors explain why train painting is a highly relevant and prestigious achievement for the writer. First, train painting is a dangerous and demanding activity. It is risky because train yards are protected by strong security systems, posing a challenge to the specific physical and strategic skills of graffiti writers and crews. Second, train painting is connected to the origins of North American graffiti, particularly in New York City, and as such it is an essential part of the historical memories and mythology. Therefore, succeeding in painting a train brings the kind prestige and notoriety among peers and connoisseurs that is highly valued by practitioners of this art form.

22 Historical neighborhood in the Portuguese capital’s downtown area. Besides being a widely popular tourist destination, for decades it has been known for its intense cultural and bohemian activity, and its active nightlife.

23 Graffiti shows and competitions in Oeiras, Seixal etc.

24 This is a term often used by graffiti writers to describe large and complex mural paintings (wall of fame). These works are valued for their aesthetical qualities (not for the risk and transgression involved) and require high level of technical skills on the part of its authors. Normally these works are executed collectively and in some cases with prior permission.
Some of the writers most acknowledged for their artistic work attended art school or have a career in art, design or illustration.


27 Street Art Show, 2008.

28 Art in the Streets show, 2012.

29 Os Gêmeos solo show, 2010.

30 Equally relevant due to the mark it made in the process of graffiti legitimation in the national context, were the different shows put up by the members of the Leg Crew, under the name Visual Art Performance, which started in 2005.

31 Many street artists develop parallel artistic careers of a more conventional nature (illustration, design or painting, etc.) which ensure them greater financial stability and allow a more sustainable management of their career.

32 Although extinguished in the meantime, this was a pioneering project in creating the first open space ephemeral museum in 2008, in one of Lisbon’s most emblematic locals for its nightlife and existing graffiti and street art: the Bairro Alto. For a more detailed description of this neighborhood’s dynamics see Campos (2009).

33 It started by being a shop selling graffiti and street art related material. Meanwhile it promoted an intense activity towards the legalization of spaces for Portuguese and foreign writers to paint on.

34 Founded in 2010, Underdogs is a Lisbon based international platform of artists connected to urban art. It organizes various gallery and street art shows.

35 Founded in 2011, this project is based outside of Lisbon. It started merely as an urban art festival in Covilhã (a town in Portugal’s central region), but has become very active developing partnerships and events related to street art forms in Lisbon and elsewhere (especially noteworthy was the organization of a show of Portuguese artists in Paris in 2013).

36 The growing economic crisis in Portugal led citizens on to the streets though out the country with huge demonstrations having taken place on October 15 and November 13, 2012.

37 The first examples of these political murals emerged unexpectedly and were illegal. More recently, however, several political murals were painted with the support of Lisbon Municipality and other entities to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Portuguese revolution. Nevertheless, the murals painted under the “40 years, 40 murals” project, had a celebrative leitmotiv and were not intended to be critical to the contemporary political class.

38 Although we still find some instances of political murals being executed occasionally by left-wing political parties.

References


