

Street art conservation: beyond surfaces' restoration

Conservazione della street art: oltre il restauro delle superfici

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ABSTRACT – *Despite the controversy, street art has now assumed the role of a relevant artistic form in modern society. Appearing in the United States during the 1960s, the street art has spread to Europe as an underground phenomenon, but in recent times its protagonists have taken on international fame such as Shepard Fairey, Swoon, Invader or Banksy.*

Within a multifaceted and discussed phenomenon, street art manifestations can be divided into two main strands. In interventions that manifest creative identification with their author, as in the case of Banksy and Blu, it is difficult to think of their conservation due to the subversive and illegal character they present, but often these compositions have been accepted and actually incorporated into the urban landscape. The case of interventions commissioned on occasions of festivals or institutional projects is different, in which street art is used as an instrument of urban regeneration. In these cases, high market quotations can also be reached, with speculative reflections that have motivated tear-off interventions, as in Banksy's graffiti in some cities of Germany and England. The question of conservation of street art continues to be controversial. It goes from the wall paintings removed between the protests of the inhabitants in Mexico and Peru, to the positive action taken

by the institutions. One case is that of the oldest dated graffiti, La Madonna in Lipsia, cleaned up, repainted by the artist and protected by methacrylate. There are cases of replication, like a graffiti by Keith Haring of 1989, repainted on a new wall in Barcelona, while in Madrid it was proposed to subject to legal protection a Muelle wall painting of the Eighties.

The conservation of murals is not an easy task: the question of the meaning of the operation and above all of the authenticity of the work remain fundamental. Furthermore, the reluctance of the artists in considering their work as artistic and the Kunstwollen himself who presides over each graffiti is to be taken into account. The answers to these questions are varied. The transfer of the paintings in museums is inappropriate, both for reasons of context, and because often operated against the will of the author, who rather seeks the perishable nature of the work. As a reaction to the musealization of one of his paintings, for example, Blu has deleted all his works in Bologna. The most important changes are perhaps by associations of researchers who, in various countries, try to preserve the work in their own context, according to the author's intention.

KEYWORDS – Mural painting; Cultural identity; Preservation; Contemporary Art.

1. What is street art?

At times frowned upon and even subject to legal prosecution, street art have become an art form of cultural significance in modern society thus deserving of preservation. Debate revolving around the need to conserve street art stems from the artistic value attached to these art interventions in public spaces.

The origin of street art and its evolution must first be examined in order to understand and determine what conservation strategies and methodologies to implement should it be appropriate.

In the beginning, graffiti first appeared in the 1960's in Philadelphia and, linked to Hip-hop and Rap, extended to New York city in the ensuing

¹ Research Group "Observatorio Aragonés de Arte en la Esfera Pública".

1/ Borondo, street art in Via Nazionale, Roma (photo by Carlota Santabárbara).

decades. It soon spread to Europe as an “underground” phenomenon developed on the outskirts of large cities. Originally consisting of signatures or tags, spontaneous individual and vandalising forms of expression in marginal contexts, graffiti nowadays constitute actual art interventions in the urban landscape closely linked to the punk and skate movements. Softened versions of the original, no longer marginal or poor, graffiti are currently created by trained artists whose interventions are seldom legally challenging and are often produced within the framework of festivals or commissioned by institutions. These artworks known as *post-graffiti* are created by internationally renowned artists such as the North-Americans Shepard Fairey and Swoon, the French artist Invader or the British Banksy.

Disparaged and rejected as this phenomenon may have initially been – perceived as an illegal act of vandalism – it has become a form of intervention which adds aesthetic value to cities and generates growing social, cultural and tourist interest, whilst not being considered art in most cases.

Street art is a modern form of cultural expression executed within the city’s public space; in terms of purpose and materials, however, some considerations must be taken into account. Free, furtive and spontaneous interventions performed in the street must be differentiated from those which, in contrast, are institutionally commissioned and respond to economic, tourist or aesthetic demands. Street art may be classed into two distinct groups:

1) Interventions seeking creative identification with their author. These constitute post-graffiti proper and encompass all sorts of interventions carried out illegally and clandestinely with the purpose of reasserting a specific art form that identifies their maker. This group includes the





2/ Borondo, Calle Cuchillería n. 36, Vitoria, Spain (photo by C. Santabárbara).

celebrated Banksy – perhaps the most widely known for using his mostly politically critical templates in streets worldwide – and the activist Blu, whose work was stripped off and displayed in a museum in Bologna in 2016², as well as other university trained creators, such as Borondo or Vermibus, who start off with clandestine interventions on the walls of cities and eventually become legal (fig. 1).

Contemplating conservation or even restoration of these types of interventions in cities may seem inconsistent inasmuch as these anonymous and illegal creations, beyond the protest or claim they may express, constitute temporary and ephemeral designs from the start. Curiously enough, these drawings and colourful patterns have been incorporated into city landscapes and architecture, socially accepted for their contribution to the adornment of urban environments. A process of appropriation thus takes place whereby society feels the need to own and preserve these creations. This longing for permanence, however, has emerged a posteriori, after a long process of acceptance, appreciation and protection attached to the social acknowledgement of their worth.

2) Secondly, attention should be paid not only to spontaneous street art but also to commissioned interventions created within the framework of festivals or institutional projects. International or local festivals promote the decoration of façades or abandoned walls to dignify degraded urban areas thus attracting tourism and interest, a phenomenon which has resulted in the gentrification of certain neighbourhoods. It is worth noting here that this creative process is not only validated and legal but its proliferation has raised the question of whether these creations – painted on walls provided by institutions – should be permanent and consequently considered part of the city's heritage.

Street art festivals nowadays held by public institutions often invite artists to carry out their interventions in the street to improve degraded city areas, i.e. *ONO'U Battle* in Tahiti, *Under Pressure* in Toronto, and *Nuart* in Stavanger, Norway. In Spain, some leading instances include festival *Asalto* in Zaragoza and *Open Walls* in Barcelona (fig. 2-3).

² Exhibition: *Street ART- Banksy&Co. L'arte allo stato urbano*, Bologna, Palazzo Pepoli, 18/03/2016- 26/06/2016.

3/ CNFS+Malakkai 2010, Asalto.
Festival Internacional de Arte Urbano,
Zaragoza, Spain (photo by Sandra
Gracia Melero).

4/ Mantra 2017, Asalto. Festival
Internacional de Arte Urbano,,
Zaragoza (photo by Sandra Gracia
Melero).



Post-graffiti engender urban regeneration, a noteworthy process of the emergence of focal points of culture and tourist attraction in degraded areas. This is the case of Banksy, whose designs in London's humble Hackney district have triggered a process of cultural gentrification attracting upscale artists and the latest art *yuppies*. Closely linked to this phenomenon, a committee exists in London associated to the Barbican Centre which produces and commissions multidisciplinary projects in East London against a backdrop of socially committed undertakings in the firm determination that street art should play a positive role in improving daily city life.

These interventions have also contributed to jump-starting the careers of many street artists who have gone on to achieve social renown and acclaim and seen their artworks on canvas become covered by museums and art galleries, as in the case of Banksy, Keith Haring or Stik – and which happened to Jean-Michel Basquiat in New York in the 1960's – or in the case of the Urban Nation in Berlin (fig. 5).

Not only aesthetic and cultural implications arise from the revitalization of urban zones; economic repercussions are also derived. In this case, the price of a house in Bristol bearing a Banksy mural had its price notably boosted above the local housing market value. But this price rise can prove a double-edged sword. Some art murals are beginning to reach high market prices and the first cases of pillaging are taking place: walls ripped out by professional teams of restaurateurs and later sold at galleries. This is purely a matter of financial speculation, as happened in the case of Banksy's graffiti ripped out of different cities in Germany and England and subsequently sold at auction for over three million euros without the artist's prior consent or knowledge. The pieces were set on metallic frames and displayed at the luxury ME hotel in London in a show called "Stealing Banksy" and were later auctioned for charity³.

5/ Street advertisement "The impossible museum Urban-Nation in Berlin. Opening 16 September 2017" (photo by Carlota Santabárbara).

³ <http://stealingbanksy.com>



6/ Asalto. Festival Internacional de Arte Urbano, Zaragoza, 2018
(photo by Sandra Gracia Melero).



The line between architecture, art and urban planning is becoming increasingly blurred in terms of the layout of tourist routes and the distribution and design of cities. Gentrification policies have unquestionably manipulated society in order to appropriate degraded parts of a city to convert them into attractive, desirable and contemporary looking art quarters which in turn triggers property speculation.

2. Should we preserve street art?

The question of whether street art should be preserved or not is a highly controversial one because these works are considered by some as art whereas others simply view them as mere decoration or acts of vandalism and of no artistic or cultural substance whatsoever.

It must be pointed out that on some occasions authorities have rejected these murals and have had them painted over or erased because they consider them detrimental to the desired image of the city. This anti post-graffiti attitude, however, has sometimes gone against the popular opinion of the citizens who, after all, live in the urban space and who ultimately lament the loss of the murals when they are removed. Contentious instances exist in cities like Lima (Peru) and Oaxaca (Mexico), where murals signed by renowned artists have been removed despite the protests of neighbours⁴ (fig. 14). The complete opposite also exists when it is the authorities themselves who resolve to preserve the contemporary murals. This is the case in London where a Graffiti Unit exists whose purpose is the preservation

⁴ L. GÓMEZ GONZALEZ, *Grafitis en peligro de extinción*, Lisboa 2015; "El País", Lima, 13/III/2015. <http://tinyurl.com/js9u8fw>



of murals made by artists who have achieved international acclaim and whose works have become iconic tourist attractions. The London Graffiti Unit places plastic covers on some graffiti (such as Banksy's) to protect them from damage.

Multiple options exist to conserve these contemporary paintings, either by documenting them, directly protecting them or recovering them by means of restoration. This was precisely the case of the restoration of the oldest known graffiti to-date, *La Madonna*, by Parisian artist Xabier Prou (alias "Blek le rat"). Located in Leipzig, Germany, it was originally intended to be temporary and it gradually deteriorated until in 2013 it was decided it should be restored. The publicity banners which had covered the image for over two decades were removed, the graffiti was cleaned and repainted by the artist himself and it was protected with methacrylate. A label told the story of the work and explained that it had been dedicated to his wife. What is significant about this case is not only the repainting and protection set in place but also the dissemination of the relevance of an artwork which is socially acknowledged and appreciated as such.

In contrast, other instances exist of totally different approaches: *strappo* for conservation in museums or copies, as testimony of a work which disappears at the same time as the wall it was painted on. This was the case of Keith Haring's *Todos juntos podemos parar el SIDA*, painted in the Raval district of Barcelona in 1989 on a building later demolished. It was traced by the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona and repainted on a new wall.

In order to preserve and protect this type of art it must first be

7/ Mantra, Asalto. Festival Internacional de Arte Urbano, Zaragoza, 2017 (photo by Sandra Gracia Melero).

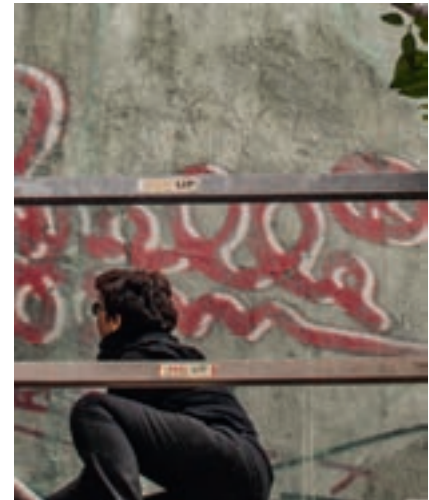
8/ Marta Gil Estremiana, *Street art in Vitoria, Spain, 2010* (photo by Carlota Santabárbara).



recognized as such and consequently protected legally from pillage and destruction. One of the graffiti painted by Juan Carlos Argüello, one of Spain's pioneers known as "Muelle", has recently been proposed for listing as a cultural property, thus accepting its historic value in Madrid in the 1980's. This is an example of how this street art has gained relevance within Spanish contemporary history and culture. Furthermore, the restoration of this work was carried out by the students of Madrid's School of Restoration and funded by the City Hall⁵ (fig. 9-10).

Reference could also be made to an unusual initiative which took place in 2016 in Zaragoza (Spain) when a work by Boa Mistura carried out some years earlier with public collaboration was under threat because of the demolition of the wall where it was painted in order to make way for the construction of a new building. The public had taken part in the creation of the mural whose beautiful message reflected an oniric vision of their lives (it read: "because I dream I am not mad"). Citizens viewed it as their own and had somehow adopted it as part of their city despite it not being listed as a cultural property. As the wall needed to be demolished for the construction of a new building it was eventually decided to distribute fragments of the work, as if they were relics, which proved a highly popular decision. The work had unquestionably gained added value and attention should be paid to the treatment given to

⁵ E. GAYO, *Restauración del Muelle de Montero. Gestión, innovación y riesgos*, in *18ª Jornada de Conservación de Arte Contemporáneo*, Madrid 2018, pp. 167-178.



9a-b/ Muelle, Mural in Calle Montera, Madrid, with Elena García Gayo, coordinator of the recuperation of Muelle's graffiti (photo by Elena García Gayo).

10/ Muelle, Mural in Calle Montera, Madrid (photo by Elena García Gayo).



these kinds of interventions, not envisaged to last, yet incorporated into society's visual memory (fig. 12).

It is essential to discern what may be considered artistic as opposed to what is not, what may be an illegal act of vandalism rather than part of an art project or a project of urban regeneration. Whether we like them or not, graffiti express our culture and form part of our common identity remaining in our collective imagery which must be preserved for the creation of our memory, the memory of our cities and of their inhabitants. We should therefore wonder at what stage does society grant artistic value to these forms of expression and why. This social question consists of the appropriation of the urban landscape once a mural has been adopted as part of our collective image, so why change it? We habitually defend the preservation of heritage and citizens consider that the paintings that they not only like but identify with already form part of their visual heritage.

3. How to preserve-restore contemporary murals?

Preserving urban spaces, especially graffiti, is no easy task as they are exposed to the actions of other graffiti artists, cleaning operations and even the will of owners whose properties have been decorated. They should thus



be registered and recorded as a first step to preservation, photographing and cataloguing them to secure their place within the city's cultural memory. Remarkably, international programmes to register contemporary murals are being created which indicate that society is gradually coming to terms with this phenomenon and concern for preservation is growing.

Interestingly enough, the *modus operandi* employed to preserve a post-graffiti wall painting is radically different from that used in the case of traditional paintings. Firstly, a thorough physical analysis must be conducted to establish what materials it is made of and secondly its artistic purpose must be established in order to propose what conservation method to follow based on the consideration of several professionals involved: curators, historians, critics and architects, as well as artists, in order to evaluate what necessary steps may be taken and the various operating options.

The creation process itself, in terms of the technique chosen, determines the endurance potentiality and aspects of the work which actually transcend painting. In the case of ancient murals a set of accepted criteria exist regarding respect for the original material and its authenticity which ultimately act as ethical and legal standards applicable to any restoration process. As for contemporary murals, however, legal protection does not apply. The challenges posed by the implementation of traditional methods of preservation and restoration of mural paintings may not be overlooked. Not only from a material viewpoint but also in terms of methodology used⁶. One of the fundamental considerations to be taken into account when questioning whether street art should or should not be preserved is to know and investigate its essence, its identity, what is it that makes it genuine. Once its *raison d'être* is established the conservation task becomes simpler. We need to ascertain whether its purpose is purely aesthetic, based on shapes and images, or it rather constitutes technical experimentation or social provocation seeking the public's reaction in a particular context.

In order to secure the permanence of an artwork the durability of its authenticity as an art form must also be guaranteed. It is therefore necessary to know who the author is since the intention of preserving and 'freezing' a creation may not actually coincide with the reason why it was created in the first place. In street art interventions there is a tendency to change with time and even to fade away.

A loophole somehow exists in terms of applicable legislation that prevents the respectful conservation both in terms of the material painting and its purpose, because in some cases these interventions are intended to be ephemeral.

At this point, the value of these works should be examined not only with regards to their material authenticity but also their symbolic value, which is what makes them worthy of preservation and reproduction in the first place. After all, as German philosopher Walter Benjamin claimed, we are living in the post-auratic era: images may be reproduced and deprived of their original unique aura.

4. The reluctance of street artists to consider their work as art.

It is important to take into account the artists' wish to remain anonymous and not be contacted to ask them whether their work is ephemeral or not. The immediate response to a social situation or the clamour stated from a socio-political viewpoint poses a series of questions which need to be addressed: the need for permanence and conservation and respect for

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11/ Estibaliz Vera, mural
in Vitoria, Spain (photo by
Carlota Santabárbara).

⁶ The ICOM states that mural paintings must be preserved in order to be restored. As regards conservation of street art, these regulations – in the absence of legislation – serve as a basis for acting on contemporary mural paintings.

12/ Boa Mistura, Street Art, Zaragoza, Spain 2012 (photo by Elena García Gayo).



changes occurring over time as apply to an ephemeral artwork created at a specific moment within a particular socio-cultural context which may not be appropriated.

From a legal point of view a conflict of interest is attached to street artworks: the intellectual property corresponds to the author whereas the ownership of the actual work is retained by the owner of the wall where the mural was painted. Both rights clash from the moment a work is made in the urban space; the artist holds the moral right but it is the owner of the surface who has legal property rights. Despite the fact that the artwork stops belonging to its author from the moment it is delivered to the public in the urban space, their “moral right” to the work prevents financial speculation especially if it was never intended for trade or sale, otherwise a legal claim could be filed.

Concerning the restoration criteria that should rule street art conservation-restoration, it is pertinent to refer to German conservation theories Hiltrud Schinzel⁷, suggesting the recuperation of the *Kunstwollen* (artistic will) already put forward by Austro-Hungarian art historian Alois Riegl in the late 19th century (1858-1905). The awareness of the artist’s intention must exist as it constitutes the fundamental value to be preserved; finding out why and for what reason the street artwork was created is therefore essential to appropriate conservation.

As the ultimate goal of restoration is to preserve the authenticity of the artwork it may be claimed that restorers must attempt to rediscover the purpose it was created for, the will to convey experiences and emotions and to recapture the *raison d’être* supporting its creation. These principles must set the basis for any steps to be taken.

The western approach to conservation endeavours to preserve the matter though, as philosopher Theodor W. Adorno reflected, art is more than matter and shape given that art, as music, demands a temporal process, a social background wherein to exist. Philosopher Massimo Carboni perceptively differentiates, from a theoretical and philosophical viewpoint, between traditional and contemporary art. A discerning opinion that ought to be recalled here when he says: “the work of contingency which

⁷ H. SHINZEL, *La intención artística y las posibilidades de la restauración*, in H. ALTHÖFER, *Restauración de la pintura contemporánea: tendencias, materiales, técnicas*, Madrid 2003, pp. 45-63 (1 ed. München 1985).

alludes, from the very moment it is presented, to its own disappearance, to deliberate and unavoidable expiration.”⁸.

13/ Exhibition “Street art-Banksy & Co” (© Genus Bononiae <https://www.dailybest.it/street-art/mostra-bologna-street-art>).

5. The point of view of the institution

Surprisingly enough, concern about the preservation of street art seems to be only in its inception amongst conservation-restoration professionals. Photographic documentation and data compilation as well as restoration work has been initially carried out and these initiatives have been strikingly promoted by public or private institutions often moved by underlying financial interests. In fact, the bibliography on Street art and its conservation has grown a lot in the last years⁹.

The acknowledgement of the aesthetic value of post-graffiti has often resulted in pillaging and illegal trade, causing some of the paintings to be ripped from walls and taken to museums or art galleries for sale. These constitute acts of financial speculation that disregard the author's copyright and moral right over the work despite not owning it physically.

The attitude adopted by museum institutions also seems bewildering. Their incomprehensible attempt to appropriate street art cannot be justified inasmuch as these interventions are intended for the urban space. Decontextualizing and transferring them to the interior of a museum seems pointless. This was the case of the exhibition: *Street Art. Banksy & Co. L'arte allo stato urbano* held in 2016 in Bologna (fig. 13). New York pieces from the 1970's and 1980's were displayed with the purpose of showing the evolution of graffiti and street art, proposing a comparative view in Italy. However, major controversy broke out as the murals of the street artist Blu were exhibited, murals which had been, without his permission, ripped from the walls on which they had been painted and taken to museums. Works created for a specific environment were thus decontextualized: the images themselves remained unaltered but their identity and their relationship with the surroundings they were originally intended for were lost. The artist's response was swift: as a protest after his first works were removed Blu erased all his paintings in the city of Bologna. He first chipped the walls and then covered his murals with grey brushstrokes so that they could not be recovered. The material loss is as significant as the message conveyed by



⁸ M. CARBONI, *Tutela, conservazione e restauro dell'arte contemporanea: l'orizzonte filosofico*, in P. MARTORE (ed.), *Tra memoria e oblio. Percorsi nella conservazione dell'arte contemporanea*, Roma, 2014, p. 9.

⁹ F. FIGUEROA-SAAVEDRA, *Graphitfragen. Una mirada reflexiva sobre el graffiti*, Madrid 2006; E. GARCÍA GAYO, *¿Se debe conservar el arte urbano basado en la premisa de: “piensa, crea, actúa y olvida”?* in *Conservación de Arte Contemporáneo*, 12ª Jornada MNCARS GE-IIC, Madrid 2011; R. LLAMAS PACHECO, *Conservar y restaurar el arte contemporáneo: un campo abierto a la investigación*, Valencia 2010. S. MERRILL, *Keeping it real?: subcultural graffiti, street art, heritage and authenticity*, in “International Journal of Heritage Studies”, 2014, pp. 1-21; E. RUBIA LÓPEZ, *Arte urbano: graffiti y post-graffiti. Acercamiento a la problemática legal y patrimonial en torno a su conservación*, 2013, Máster oficial en Conservación y Restauración de Bienes Culturales, Universitat Politècnica de València (<http://hdl.handle.net/10251/39193>).



14a-b/ Lapiztola, murales in Oaxaca, México, 2015.

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15/ Julien de Casablanca, reproduction of Au pied de la falaise, by W. A. Bouguereau, Memphis (TN, USA), 2018 (photo by J. Casablanca).

the artist through erasure. Street art cannot be stolen, exhibited or sold.

Restorer Cornelia Weyer contends that “the existence of a large amount of original material is not the only criterion to establish that an artwork is original”¹⁰. In the case of street art, the originality of a piece of work lies in the fact that it retains its “urban” features, that is, that it remains in the place it was intended for.

The conservation of street art must not only affect its aesthetic integrity but also appreciate its intangible meaning, the message conveyed and the urban context it belongs to. Consequently, in order to respect the authenticity of the artistic creation, not only the material preservation as historical document but also the work as a global form of creation must be taken into account abiding by concepts of authenticity, intent, context and intellectual message.

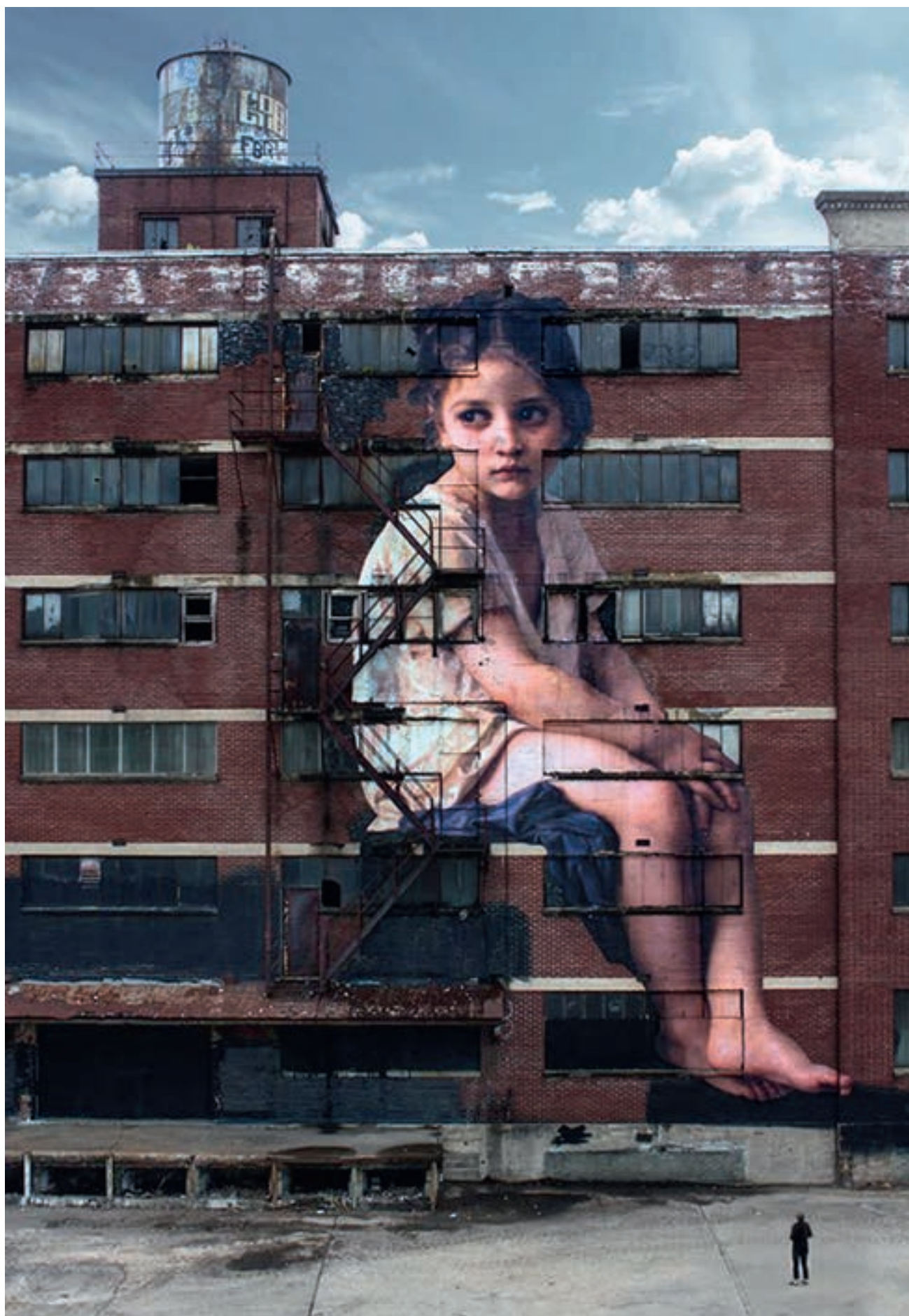
6. The point of view of curators-restorers

Professional restorers are showing growing interest in the preservation-restoration of street art. Associations linked to street art preservation have emerged in the last few years: *Rescue Public Murals*, *Restore Public Museum* or *Observatorio de Arte Urbano* strive to set ethical guidelines in this respect.

Interventions in public spaces have remarkably been incorporated into tuition and training from various perspectives, setting the parameters for good praxis. The line of investigation of street art carried out by the Spanish Group of the International Institute for Conservation (GE-IIC) has established the methodological basis for the professional ethics which must govern the conservation of street art. The Department of Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art of the University of West Attica of Athens has also created an independent association of researchers of street art interventions and sympathisers, ST.A.CO, to undertake and manage conservation and restoration work. The innovative tuition project “From the virtual into the social space. Towards new teaching methodology of Mural Painting applied to the rehabilitation of the urban space” presented by the Universidad Complutense of Madrid is also highly stimulating. Reference should finally be made to the project CAPuS¹¹ “Conservation of art in public

¹⁰ C. WEYER, *Media art and limits of established ethics of restoration*, in U. SCHÄDLER-SAUB, C. WEBER, *Theory and practice in the conservation of modern and contemporary art: reflections on the roots and the perspectives: proceedings of the international symposium held. 13-14 January 2009 at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Faculty Preservation of Cultural Heritage, Hildesheim*, London 2010, p. 21.

¹¹ CAPuS: The University of Turin is leading the project CAPuS, Conservation of Art in Public Spaces, which involves 7 universities, 4 companies, 1 association, 1 museum, 1 research centre and 2 municipalities throughout Europe. Totally, there are 16 European partners, located in Italy, Germany, Croatia, Poland and Spain. A further one is located in the USA. The project, developed within Erasmus+ “Knowledge alliances”, has been financed by the European Commission and aims at establishing a preservative protocol for urban art, a precious way for regenerating the city. <http://www.studyintorino.it/it/capus-la-conservazione-dellarte-urbana-par-te-da-unito/>



spaces” funded by the EU Erasmus+ cooperation funds for innovation and good practices known as “Knowledge Alliances” coordinated by the University of Turin to complete a series of conservation projects on artworks in urban spaces eventually resulting in the creation of postgraduate courses.

The aforementioned initiatives reveal the evolution occurring in society and the growing interest in the field of conservation-restoration to respond to new approaches and professional challenges in terms of tuition and future jobs.

Conclusion

Street art conservation must not only address the preservation of works commissioned by municipalities and festivals but also the conservation of art initiatives which border on the illegal because they are carried out without previous consent but do not intend to cause damage or spoil a surface, on the contrary, their purpose is to fill the white walls of cities with colours and messages.

Restoration must not simply document, photograph and geolocate street art emerging on city walls. Despite the fact that street art may not be contemplated as heritage, different forms of conservation of some leading instances must be assessed, always complying with ethical conservation methodology. The decision as to whether street art must be preserved or not will rest on the will of the various agents involved: the artists, the neighbourhood and the owner, amongst others. It ultimately concerns the people who live nearby, to whom the visual landscape belongs, people who live with street art and people who share it for a period of time and feel identified with it. Street art must remain, as long as is socially appreciated, as a potentially conservable and restorable creation though always in its original context, in the street, which is the context the works were created for and where they were born. But it would be necessary to value up to what point the civil opinion has sufficiently to be able like to be able to decide that the street art should remain or not, this supposes a conflict in the decision making of preserving or to demolish a painted mural, and this is a fundamental problem which we cannot obviate.