

# Street art /today

The 50 most  
influential  
street artists  
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# # FOREWORD

Martyn Reed,

founder, director and curator  
of Norway's international contemporary  
street and urban art festival Nuart

FOREWORD

My personal relationship to art, and in particular subcultural art, is a typical 'from rags to polyester' story. An artless childhood steeped in poverty, deprivation, bad schooling, domestic violence and urban blight. For most, the light at the end of the tunnel being nothing more than a miner's lamp at the local colliery, the predominant industry in the industrial North of England at the time being mining – or for the younger ones, of which I was one, raised on dilapidated council estates, a life of vandalism, violence and petty crime. Graffiti was to come a short time later, and anyone too young for punk, with more than a passing interest in drawing, other than on their schoolbag, would be swept along in this revolutionary new youth culture.

Most communities ravaged by government neglect and a poverty of attention, both public and domestic, contain the seeds of a subculture – they just need adequate water. Ironically, the water that nurtured the seed of the Nuart Festival was fire. Creativity, born from a lack of attention or as an escape from an oppressive reality, will always find an outlet, and the more it is genuinely needed, as a necessity for survival, the more authentic it will be. Young working-class kids coming of age in a post-war environment to create

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mod culture in the UK or black youth getting their hands on an 808 drum machine in a post-apocalyptic Detroit to create techno are prime examples of this desire and need for expression. But perhaps at the time, the one defining cultural milestone for street kids was the evening news coverage of the total economic and systemic collapse of the New York borough, the South Bronx. 'The Bronx is burning' headlines flickered nightly across the UK's glowing valve-driven TVs, showing a rioting underclass fighting back against the causes of their suffering. It was an inspiration to many neglected youngsters who identified with the struggle. For many, including myself, the film of the day was *The Warriors* and the soundtrack 'Rapper's Delight'. It was a culture that would coalesce a disparate series of minor personal art experiences under one banner and give a voice to generations. From mindless vandalism born of desperation to Vandalism with style and purpose. To paraphrase Mikhail Bakunin, the nineteenth-century Russian radical and founder of collective anarchism, the passion for destruction really did become a creative joy.

It is perhaps more than a coincidence that while European proto-punks, the Situationists, a major influence on the student revolts of 1968

and an influence on street art today, stressed the importance of play, so the film *The Warriors* adopted a similar call to arms, with the more chilling 'Warriors ... Come out to play'.

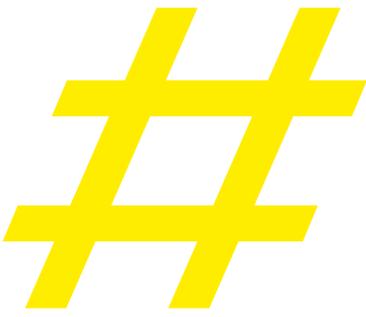
The eventual self-brokered peace between opposing gangs in the Bronx quickly led to an explosion of creativity in music, art and dance that spawned perhaps one of the most powerful and vocal global youth cultures, hip hop. Based around 'block parties' that brought black, Latino and white youth together, it would soon take root and invent its own codes, language and art forms. It developed a uniquely postmodern attitude, taking inspiration from anywhere and everywhere. It was this explosion of global influences from German Krautrock and the likes of Kraftwerk that quickly led to electro, which planted the seeds for techno and by default, most of the urban electronic music we hear today. It would see graffiti artist Futura 2000 rapping with that most punk of UK punk bands, The Clash, which amplified the similarities between radical European punk politics and the struggles faced by Blacks in inner-city ghettos. Uptown and downtown scenes would join forces and create new art forms, the turntable would become an instrument, and the simple act of writing your name, over

and over, offered the possibility of escape and even fame. Art house Europe, anarchy, hip hop, punk, graffiti, stencils, Xeroxed flyers and the wildest of fashions. Everything went into the mix. The merging of what had been several very disparate cultures formed the foundations of a new, rich and truly international movement. It is the sights and sounds of this generation, born on the waves of post-punk and hip-hop optimism that echo on our walls today.

*As a side note, in 1978, in the midst of this South Bronx chaos, Austrian artist Stefan Elns founded Fashion Moda, a small gallery that helped redefine the function of art in this new postmodern culture. Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Mark Kostabi, John Fekner, Stefan Roloff, Don Leicht, Daze, Crash, Spank, Richard Hambleton and Christy Rupp are just a few of the notable artists that exhibited at Fashion Moda and that inform street art today.*

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# PREFACE

Bjørn Van Poucke & Elise Luong

Often misunderstood as graffiti's nicer cousin or 'that thing Banksy does', street art has been dissected – exhaustively – over the past few decades by historians, critics, dealers and academics in an effort to define it. We are not writing this book because we are more educated, or worldly. We are not here to moralize or to give in-depth academic facts. We just want to show you a snippet of contemporary practices, current artists and styles that are rapidly flourishing worldwide. This book focuses on *street art today*, visual artwork in the public domain from around the globe.

Opinions on contemporary street art vary as widely as the definitions themselves. Banded about like a theoretical hot potato, producers, organizers, commissioners, curators, critics and the media take their burned hands and point their finger in the direction of their vested interest. Today street art is understood as a movement of contemporary art, though historical accounts appear rather short-sighted, with the popular belief that it popped up out of nowhere somewhere around the 1960s (just ask Wikipedia). In reality, visual art in the public space has one of the longest and most widespread backgrounds of all creative forms, with certain points in history having a strong influence on the production of

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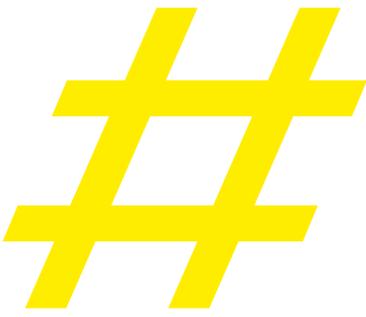
current artists. We contend that the work of contemporary street artists continues a long tradition of visual art production in the public space present throughout art history.

We cannot say it was easy to tackle the artist selection. To choose the fifty best artists of today there are hundreds of approaches we could have used and it seemed base to leave personal taste aside. Simply grouping artists geographically, in this day and age of global communication, made little sense. Also, postmodern artists are generally allergic to being placed in categories, and rightly so. We decided – somewhat dryly, you may think – to look at things mathematically and with a very tight selection model.

The featured artists have been chosen according to their productions in the public space over the past two years. We examined their consistency in terms of style and technical quality, the influence their originality has had on other practising artists, and their popularity across various social media networks. Luckily, Bjørn has a secret love for spreadsheets and once all of this data was gathered certain themes became apparent. Stylistically there is a strong presence of visual trends influenced by avant-garde movements such as surrealism and geometric abstraction, and much current production

continues to represent a long line of artistic retaliation. Outdoor installation artists can usually be connected through their common rejection of the gallery or museum space, while those creating photorealistic murals often have a discourse rejecting conceptual art, attempting to revive a return to technical prowess. Geographically, there is a higher percentage of reputable artists to be found in Europe and North America. With ease of travel between different cultures, long-standing access to visual information, quality of materials and accepted individual agency, these artists have much more comfortable environments in which to create.

Looking at street art as simply the practice of producing visual art in the public space, we attempted to derive a system of classification, grouping artists with aesthetic similarities. This could be seen as a frustrating exercise. Being actors in the street art world ourselves we are harshly aware of how quickly creatives evolve and trends morph, flourish or fade to nothing. By the time this book reaches your eyes, the world of street art will have changed with new artists producing every day so we are excited to see what the future holds. We hope you enjoy this publication as a taste of things past, a showcase of things present and a hint of things to come.



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# #INTRO- DUCTION

From cave paintings to the Internet

Working  
outside of  
institutions  
both  
physically and  
ideologically  
is now highly  
valued, thanks  
to artistic  
movements  
like Dadaism  
and  
surrealism.

Street art's development can be illustrated with the influence that social context has had on artists' intentions, subject matter, notions of the individual and collective, conceptions of public and private, legality and ownership. Art in the public space, muralism in particular, has not had constant linear value and certain historical events influenced the rise and fall of its importance for artists and society at large. The following is a very brief timeline of some defining moments that have led us to witness the artworks produced today.

Man has forever painted on walls. The earliest known traces of mural art date back to the Stone Age, and on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi we can still see the oldest recorded figurative cave paintings from about 39,900 BCE. The imagery mostly depicts animals with humans represented by reverse stencilling (spraying paint on the back of the hand, leaving the hand's outline). It is assumed that the works were left to communicate to other nomads through the use of storytelling, though of course our knowledge of social interaction and interpretative capacities remains inarguably limited.

A huge jump in time and we see the Ancient Egyptians using visual art with a quite specific

intent and purpose. Paintings, hieroglyphics and sculptures adorned public structures and interiors. These productions were used to record history and to decorate but most importantly to represent life after death as a passport for the deceased to travel safely into the afterlife. A very notable element of this period is the invention of visual symbolism. Artists communicated social status not through written language but through visual references by varying portrait sizes or the intensity of clothing colour. Social position could then easily be understood by the larger population through these visual cues.

The Ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans also invented the fresco technique, which much later in art history would be used during a concentrated outburst of muralism during the Italian Renaissance. This method of directly applying a mixture of plaster and colour pigment to walls enables the artwork to be permanently integrated into the architecture. Though the fresco technique was used throughout the Middle Ages, it is widely regarded as an Italian invention. Indeed, many of the great Renaissance artists in a surprisingly short period of time were able to develop not only visual techniques of realism and perspective, but were able

to draw art away from the decorative to give narrative the utmost importance. With such major works as the Sistine Chapel series by artists like Botticelli, Rosselli and Michelangelo, to name a few, artists inhabiting the public space in this manner were highly celebrated and sought after for their individual techniques and styles.

Aside from technique development, evolutions in critical reflection and theory also have an essential impact on contemporary artist production. Certain artist groups have had lasting influences on street art through their revolutionary approach to creative practice and public consumption. Around 1890, a group of artists and architects primarily based in Brussels and Paris formed the group 'Art à la Rue' (Art in the Street). Notoriously left wing, the group aimed to challenge what they believed to be an elitist system by bringing art to the working class. They produced accessible, colourful, easily interpreted prints, paintings and sculptures, and placed them in popular urban meeting points. The works aimed to appeal to a wide variety of social and educational backgrounds and the artists believed in art's duty to beautify the urban landscape and improve the quality of life.

**The Mexican  
muralism  
movement is  
seen today  
as one of the  
strongest  
influences  
on street  
artists of the  
Americas.**

A few decades later, movements such as Dadaism, surrealism, constructivism and many other avant-garde groups questioned the artist's status, refuting the fact that artists had to be defined through their educational background or inclusion in the art market. When interest in the productions of 'non-artists' grew in the 1940s – most famously theorized by Jean Dubuffet – it continued to theorize the value of production outside of the typical educational and social milieu. The creation of the art brut movement regarded productions by people outside of existing art circles as more authentic than works by those 'tainted' through education. Working outside of institutions both physically and ideologically is now highly valued thanks to these artistic movements, leaving those without a formal education wanting to produce in the street access to recognition previously unknown.

Around the same period, artists across the Atlantic were being commissioned by governments hoping to stimulate reunification. The Mexican muralism movement is seen today as one of the strongest influences on street artists of the Americas. From the 1920s, public murals were used as political and social message boards aiming to reunify the Mexican people in the post-revolution era. As Mexico attempted to recover from bloody civil battles, artists were commissioned to promote pro-revolution ideals to the mostly illiterate population and conditions were ideal as the government allocated monumental walls, allowed complete artistic freedom and paid substantial fees. This communication and organizational system spread north and south, influencing artists and governments across both continents. Similar works can also be seen in Italy; however, their roots were directly in the people. As early as the 1960s, notably in the Sardinia region of Italy, the dissatisfaction with social unrest was voiced through hundreds of depictions of political and daily issues. This was an important shift in the use of street art by the public as anti-government and anti-institution.

Previously, however, the period of economic depression had served as a defining moment for many artists based in the US as the Roosevelt Government launched the Federal Art Project through the Works Project Administration in 1935. The programme was designed as relief funding for unemployed artists, with thousands of creatives being commissioned to produce works, many of which were to be placed in municipal buildings and public spaces. The programme included a substantial mural division and some of the pieces produced through the programme went on to become the most significant public artworks of the country. The programme financially assisted many great artists of the twentieth century – Jackson Pollock, Arshile Gorky and Mark Rothko being big names that would later continue their careers and be recognized as revolutionary in the fields of abstract expressionism.

Visual artists have not always been paid for such positive objectives. Since the invention of the term ‘propaganda’ in the seventeenth century, artworks such as posters, paintings, literature and film have been used to influence public opinion by repressive governments and pragmatic religious groups. Propaganda did not always hold negative connotations. However, it did get a bit of a bad rap after its well documented use in World War II. The Germans, having learned from the British, invented the Ministry of Propaganda and made effective use of a certain style of visual information in their political campaigns. This became one of the best known propaganda crusades, though many totalitarian states have had, or still use, similar controlling methods. The use of repetition, impartial information, loaded messages and exaggerated depictions has since been adopted by non-commissioned artists around the world and is now very common in street art production.

World War II was also a defining moment in the propagation of graffiti, with American,

Australian and British soldiers writing a common phrase on walls, the best known being the Americans scribbling ‘Kilroy was here’, accompanied by a doodle of a bald man peeking over a wall. The Australian equivalent was ‘Foo was here’ and the British ‘Mr Chad’. These graffiti marks were quickly accepted in popular culture and largely documented by international media. This was an important moment as the act of tagging was seen as socially acceptable and even celebrated as positive nationalism.

As the line between art and popular culture begins to blur, we see the beginnings of Pop art in the 1950s with major groups developing in England and the US. Retaliating against the elite art systems by including elements of popular culture in artworks became common. There was also a coinciding development in reproductive techniques that allowed for the mass production of works. More importantly, however, was the understanding, questioning and rebellion against mass media and advertising that was starting to invade the public space. As private companies took over the visual landscape, artists ironically adopted the same techniques in order to promote their own creative work critiquing the system that they had come to understand. This never-ending cycle of retaliation and criticism still fuels many an artist today.

A decade later and we are still in the US with the rise of the style known as the Graffiti Art Movement. Street art as it is commonly understood today has for various reasons been indefinitely linked to the social phenomenon many people call graffiti. In the broadest sense, graffiti is a form of street art in that it is – sorry to state the obvious – produced in the street. Graffiti as a style, however, has a much more defined structure and history, making it inversely more comprehensible. If street art can be traced back to the depiction of animals and cave paintings, graffiti art as a ‘movement’ has its defining debut in Philadelphia in the 1970s.

A creative process almost exclusively based on the tag, graffiti artists communicate with one another through highly esoteric language that is mostly incomprehensible to people outside graffiti culture. Graffiti artists as well as artists producing in the street found themselves in the spotlight when the crossroads of political, commercial and media interest converged on a handful of artists in New York. Even at this time artists were refusing to be categorized and the media generally satisfied itself by lumping hip hop, graffiti, rap and street art into one marketable whole. As most artists producing in the postmodernist era generally reject categorization, so should the media, critics and the public avoid the seduction of simplified pigeonholing when regarding contemporary street artists.

As the Internet sidled its way into society during the late 1980s and 1990s, so did a radical change in the way artworks could be shared with the greater public. Artists producing in the street were no longer limited to the eyes of local passers-by, nor was it necessary to travel to the other side of the world to become known. As the public became accustomed to seeing images of works around the globe, artists also learned how to go viral. Enter the street art superstars. It is impossible to write an introduction to street art without mentioning the likes of Banksy, Obey or JR. Being unquestionably the best known by the general public, these artists have enabled street art at the very least to be highly visible and a matter of social debate that goes beyond the typical 'vandalism versus fine art' discourse. Thanks to their explosion in the media and online, artists are now comfortable with communicating their works to other artists and millions of viewers around the globe, though arguably for a fleeting moment of time.

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This gently brings us to the issues of production today. Though artists have since the beginning of visual art been seen to place their works in the public sphere, contemporary street artists are confronted with very specific issues relative to our time. Digital technology has given society a very different perception of public space and reality. People do not only exist in public and private spheres but also virtually. In some ways this has expanded the playing field of artists, the flip side arguably making the physical production redundant as context and situation are largely ignored. On a commercial level, street artists have been accepted in the art market since the 1980s, but the dramatic inflation of their market value has left many suffering from unsustainable pricing, with some gallerists believing the trend is over. Be that as it may, street art, not as a defined movement but as a form of expression, has been present constantly and globally and there seems to be no foreseeable reason for this form of expression to die out. Let us be thankful that artists around the globe are constantly beautifying our visual landscape by pushing the boundaries of technique, concept and form.

»/

Elian in Córdoba, 2013,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

Ella & Pitr in Borås, 2015,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTISTS.

Agostino Iacurci in Taipei, 2013,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

Alexis Diaz and Inti in Sao Paulo, 2015,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTISTS.

Guido Van Helten in Kiev, 2015,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

Isaac Cordal in Montreal, 2015, 017  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.





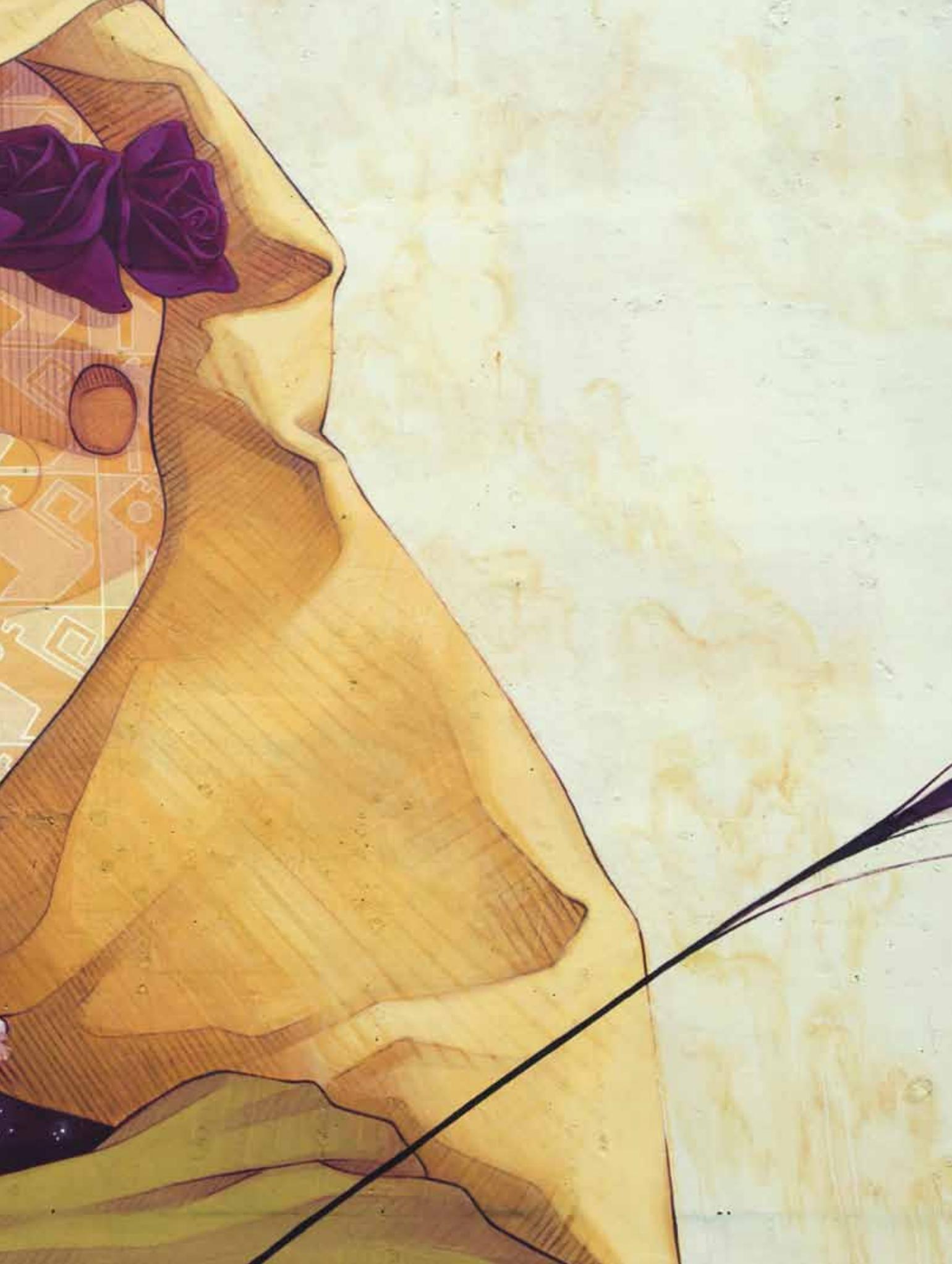




















# 1 / AB- STRACT

CHAPTER 1

030

1010

ELIAN

MAYA HAYUK

Although present in many other cultures beforehand, abstract art was introduced into the Western world around the turn of the twentieth century. The easiest way to define abstraction is lack of representation, the polar opposite being figurative or representational art.

Abstract art in the Western world emerged from a long lineage of movements that had begun playing with different ways of representing reality. Expressionists depicting a scene would drastically distort images in order to exaggerate emotion. Cubists would decompose portraits and objects, though essentially still leaving them recognizably representational. Impressionist, post-Impressionist and the short-lived Fauvist movement employed increasingly saturated colour palettes and wilder brushstrokes. However, all of these artists were in some way portraying reality.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the rising possibility of artists being able to communicate with each other internationally greatly accelerated experimental practices. By 1910, many 'pure' abstract artworks had already been created and as artists began to flee the looming war in Europe, the United States became a melting pot of cultures and artistic practices. Quite a number of styles of abstract art came into existence at this time. However, two in particular have retained a strong influence on street artists today.

Abstract expressionism gathers a number of prolific artists that were working in post-war New York. This group produced visually dissimilar works ranging from Jackson Pollock's action paintings to Mark Rothko's colour fields. However, certain

elements brought them together: a strong interest in the gestural process of painting as well as a fascination with paint as material and subject combined. Street artists today have a strong relationship with the physical nature of painting, especially those creating illegally. Taggers are often concerned with the flow of their pieces; the need to paint quickly trains their eye to appreciate fluidity. Street artists also have a highly experimental approach to applying paint on to surface: from fire extinguishers to filled water balloons, from fertilizer pumps to open paint cans attached to bikes, from water guns to stamps or a bow and arrow. The act of painting can be as important as the final work itself.

Visually, geometric abstraction has become increasingly common in street art. Some artists and critics define this as the 'purest' form of art. It often deals only in black and white or primary colours and straight, angular forms and flat colour planes. Artists working in this way in the street can be seen painting huge colour blocks seemingly randomly on walls or running lines and lines of paint across pavements and streets. This could be read more as a rejection of our visually loaded urban landscape or simply a celebration of paint and colour. In any case, artists today do not necessarily feel the need to represent reality thanks to movements of the past that paved their way towards abstraction.

For the past few years 1010 has been producing illusionary abstract works that he calls the Loch (Hole) series. The images range from small-format paper cut-outs to monumental murals. Using a simple technique of shading and colour layering, he creates the impression of depth, suggesting a portal into another dimension. When placed in the public space, 1010's works play with our perspective and in turn with optical perception of the urban space around us.

Although rather critical of the contemporary art scene, 1010 produces as much in the street as he does for gallery walls, with an easily recognizable aesthetic that enables him to morph like a chameleon in both these worlds.



1  
2



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**1 /**  
New Delhi, 2015,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

**2 /**  
Panama City, 2015,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

**3 /**  
Hamburg, 2014,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.



4

4 /  
Marseille, 2015,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

5 /  
Varese, 2015,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.





# ELIAN

/ Argentina

When I  
initially  
started doing  
graffiti, my  
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Over the past few years, Elian has gained international acclaim for his works of bold geometric abstraction. Taking into account the visual context of the architecture, he builds his pieces through the precise placement of primary colour blocks. In this conversation he evokes his production process, abstraction and delicious food.

*Many of your murals take into account the architectural lines of the buildings they are placed on. How would you describe your production process? Do you calculate things very precisely or do you freestyle when you are at the wall?*

**E**I think that art defines itself as such before its creation. If you manage to successfully interpret the environment where the work will breathe, it will help you to approach the desired result.

Sometimes the chosen place already has its own functionality and no intervention is needed. This is not always the case.

When I initially started doing graffiti, my work was the fruit of a spontaneous gesture. Today, I could not do it this way. Work in the public space demands preparation and precise analysis to accomplish an accessible language. I work step by step: I try to read the environment: What does it offer me? How does it work? What is overwhelming about

it and what is lacking? What social-political-cultural context does it belong to?

**E**I set out my intentions: Do I want to create a harmonious situation or an uncomfortable atmosphere? Do I want the work to be seen as a piece of art? Could my previous intentions be modified due to the functionality of the piece? Does the work aim to be the subject of debate?

**Realization:** This is the materialization of the work. This moment is just that – a circumstance.

I observe the result, and I am a part of it. I learn and I share.

Without any doubt, I am closer to speculation than to freestyling. Improvisation is not a part of my creative process.

*Abstract artists have been seen to behave more like designers than artists, treating the public space in its multiple dimensions. Have you ever contacted a*



2

3



2/

Córdoba, 2014,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

3/

New York, 2013,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

I am very  
interested  
in design  
and I think it  
shares many  
strategies with  
contemporary  
art.

*city planner or an architect to take your art to the next level?*

**E**I have the academic background of a designer. I am very interested in design and I think it shares many strategies with contemporary art. Through my work I am in constant contact with city planners and architects as well as anthropologists and sociologists. I believe that an interdisciplinary practice nourishes the artistic imagination. By contrast, focusing on a single creative field risks leading to a cultural void.

The contemporary human being is almost totally multidisciplinary; art reflects this. Not just to feed the concept and the body of a work, but also so as not to get bored. In what is personal, strict categorization is not enough. In fact, thanks to this capacity to adapt, if one day I get tired of making art, I would

probably want to get involved in urban planning and architecture. I would rather respect my personal intuition because, rather than just a connection with art, I have a connection with an attitude, a way of thinking. I will carry this with me all my life, no matter what my activity is.

I am currently about to publish my first book, which includes 35 mm analogue photographs. They are frontal shots taken in more than twenty cities around the world. It also includes essays and writings where the main topic is the contemporary urban lifestyle. I consider this work a piece of art although it is not strictly speaking a painting. In the book, there is no direct reference to my work in the public space as a painter.

*Looking at artists such as 1010, Felice Varini and Maya Hayuk, we see a resurgence of abstraction in public artworks. Why do you think there is renewed interest for this movement?*

**E**I believe that the public space now is saturated. Cities have reached their limits. We are daily exposed to a mass of symbols and figurative references, either in our intimate lives or in public. This exhausts our mental energy.

I believe in abstraction as another language. To give an example: if it was about verbal language rather than the creation of sounds, I would generate silence.

Nowadays, we are the victims of massive broadcasting of images with a high level of information. As it is in the city, this search for a language that allows another level of interaction means that abstraction and geometry are recurrent aesthetics.



*Piet Mondrian said that he uses primary colours because he wants to go back to the foundation of things. Why do you use primary colours?*

**E** Primary colours are not just used to respect tradition in the way we work with geometry, but they are also part of the fusional process I try to reach with my work. I am gradually taking information from the work to achieve precise relationships between the elements I use. Primary colours are among the first visual stimuli we recognize. They are a part of us and there is no need for highly intellectual criteria to understand them.

*Have you ever produced figurative work? If so, what led you to produce abstract art?*

**E** No, I have not. Also, I consider my earlier work as the experimentation that led me to the work I am producing today. I never consider what I am doing as art. My experiences with figuration were just tests to build the foundation of my artistic concept.

*In some project descriptions you talk of your responsibility. What do you think is the responsibility of an artist?*

**E** To sacrifice his whole life to an idea.

*You must be familiar with the art work of Sol LeWitt, who had an immense impact on various movements such as conceptual art and minimalism. Although he created over 1,200 murals, he also produced installation work. Is that the next step for you, making installations? Have you already experimented with this practice?*

**E** Sol LeWitt is my biggest influence. For me, his *modus operandi*

with art, his intention and his conceptual realm have a richness that few modern artists have reached. His work helped me to understand mine.

The truth is that I find very interesting the dialogue between the formal art institutions. I might follow the same path; but, without any doubt, this has already been done. I do have other concerns and other needs. My art is asking for something else.

That is the big issue for modern individuals. There is a lack of empty spaces in which to develop creativity. Hyperactivity and the need of immediate success lead creators to just repeat their influences.

*Your work speaks a lot about context. Does it comment on the social and historical context?*

**E** The factors of time and space are always there. None of this could happen in another context. I do not like to include explicit references. I prefer if the analysis and the experience it creates become the start of a debate.

*Is the street art scene in South America very different from elsewhere? It seems that many of you have been heavily influenced by the Mexican Muralism movement. Did that have an influence on you and your fellow artists?*

**E** Street art is the same everywhere because it functions as a franchise. Being part of the development of extreme capitalism, adapting to local culture tends to be a bit forced. There are some distinguishing characteristics: technical specifics, inspirations, the topics developed, hierarchies, etc. But the matrix is the same.





Personally, I am not influenced by Mexican Muralism. I do not even consider myself a painter as such. My aim is different. The only thing we could have in common is the support and the technique. But I find commonalities with other types of public-space aesthetics. Some of my friends have been heavily influenced by this movement. They are not just inspired by the style, but there is also a common subject matter. To be honest, Latin America is a real personal influence. This is not explicit in my work, but it is in the way I manage my production.

*What do you mean by that?*

**E** I mean the way I work, the attitude. Latin America is defined by a natural tendency. Historically, we have a fighting spirit that comes from the political context, which is reflected directly in the cultural field. No matter where I would live in my life, I would have a specific way of considering the work. It is something that defines me. What we have reached culturally here is the fruit of many sacrifices. The sociopolitical context is very oppressive. We are the victims of a cultural colonialism that is destroying a lot of nuances. The confrontation is quite difficult. Cultures, countercultures, para-cultures have not been given a high position. This effort we need to make is what strengthens my belief system.

*There is a well-known saying that says: 'To travel is to eat.' What countries do you like travelling to and where do you believe they have the greatest food?*

**E** In a really short period of time, I had the opportunity to visit Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, the US, France, England,

Italy, Mexico, Poland, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Russia and Uruguay. The truth is that in each place I visited, I had an unbelievable experience. Without any doubt, the best food I tried was in Peru. Mexico is great for street food, Russia for alcoholic beverages. The United States was where I ate the worst in my life. But the best food is always in my own home!



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5 6



ABSTRACT

# MAYA HAYUK

/ United States

Maya Hayuk is a Ukrainian-American artist with an extensive background in a wide range of visual and media art practices. Her inventions, whether in the form of massive murals or as paintings and objects, rely heavily on experimentation and improvisation, resulting in her own signature of vivid, geometric, psychedelic abstractions.

Her outdoor technical process is governed by context and environmental conditions as she carefully studies the architecture's lighting, texture, size, visibility and cultural surroundings. Once she has completed her analysis, she paints quickly and intuitively, without premeditation or sketches. This way, her work takes on its own life and has the ability to evolve organically, leaving room for chance along the way.

Having worked closely with many musicians, the viewer can easily see and feel the auditory influence in Maya Hayuk's work. Repetitions, patterns and colours behave like beats, rhythms and melodies from dissonant yet optimistic musical compositions, allowing for very individual experiences and personal interpretations.

Most of her  
practice  
relies on her  
signature  
vibrant colour  
scheme and  
graphically  
directive lines.



1/

Rabat, 2015,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

2/

Copenhagen, 2015,  
PHOTO BY BRIAN EBERHARDT  
CHAPMAN.





3

4





3 /  
Berlin, 2015,  
PHOTO BY THE ARTIST.

4 /  
New York, 2014,  
PHOTO BY MARTHA COOPER.

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© Uitgeverij Lannoo nv, Tielt, 2016

D/2015/45/229 – NUR 646

ISBN: 9789401426978

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