THE HANDBOOK OF VISUAL CULTURE

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The Work on the Street: Street Art and Visual Culture

MARTIN IRVINE

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STREET ART IN CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE

Street art, c. 2010, is a paradigm of hybrid art in global visual culture, a post-postmodern genre being defined more by real-time practice than by any sense of unified theory, movement or message. Many artists associated with the 'urban art movement' do not consider themselves 'street' or 'graffiti' artists, but as artists who consider the city their necessary working environment. It's a form at once local and global, post-photographic, post-Internet and post-medium, intentionally ephemeral but now documented almost obsessively with digital photography for the Web, constantly appropriating and remixing imagery, styles and techniques from all possible sources. It's a community of practice with its own learned codes, rules, hierarchies of prestige and means of communication. Street art began as an underground, anarchic, in-your-face appropriation of public visual surfaces, and has now become a major part of visual space in many cities and a recognized art movement crossing over into the museum and gallery system.[1] This chapter outlines a synthetic view of this hybrid art category that comes from my own mix of experiences and roles—as an art and media theorist in the university, as an owner of a contemporary gallery that has featured many street artists and as a colleague of many of the artists, curators, art dealers and art collectors who have contributed to defining street art in the past two decades.[2]

The street artists who have been defining the practice since the 1990s are now a major part of the larger story of contemporary art and visual culture. Street art synthesizes and circulates a visual vocabulary and set of stylistic registers that have become instantly recognizable throughout mass culture. Museum and gallery exhibitions and international media coverage have taken Shepard Fairey, Banksy, Swoon and many others to levels of recognition unknown in the institutionally authorized art world. Street art has also achieved a substantial bibliography, securing it as a well-documented genre and institutionalized object of study.[3] This globalized art form represents a cultural turning point as significant, permanent and irreversible as the reception of Pop art in the early 1960s.

For contemporary visual culture, street art is a major connecting node for multiple disciplinary and institutional domains that seldom intersect with this heightened state of visibility. The clash of intersecting forces that surround street art exposes often suppressed questions about regimes of visibility and public space, the constitutive

locations and spaces of art, the role of communities of practice and cultural institutions, competing arguments about the nature of art and its relation to a public, and the generative logic of appropriation and remix culture (just to name a few).

Street art subcultures embody amazingly inventive and improvisational counter-practices, exemplifying Michel de Certeau's description of urban navigators in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (de Certeau 1984) and Henri Lefebvre's analyses of appropriations of public visual space in cities (Lefebvre 1991, 2003, 1996). Street artists exemplify the contest for visibility described by Jacques Rancière in his analysis of the 'distribution of the perceptible', the social-political regimes of visibility: the regulation of visibility in public spaces and the regime of art, which policies the boundaries of art and artists' legitimacy (Rancière 2004a, 2006a,b, 2009a,b). However the reception of street art continues to play out, many artists and their supporters have successfully negotiated positions in the two major visibility regimes—the nonart urban public space regime and the highly encoded spaces of art world institutions. Street art continues to develop with a resistance to reductionist categories: the most notable works represent surprising hybrid forms produced with the generative logic of remix and hybridization, allowing street artists to be several steps ahead of the cultural police hailing from any jurisdiction.

By the early 1990s, street art was the ghost in the urban machine becoming self-aware and projecting its repressed dreams and fantasies onto walls and vertical architecture, as if the visible city were the skin or exoskeleton of something experienced like a life form in need of aesthetic CPR. A visually aware street art cohort in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Paris and London began to see the city as the real teacher, providing a daily instruction manual for the visual codes and semiotic systems in which we live and move and have our being. A call went out to hack the visually predatory codes of advertising, the rules of the attention economy and the control of visibility itself. A new generation of art school–educated artists heard the call and joined the ranks of those already on the ground; they combined punk and hip-hop attitude with learned skills and knowledge of recent art movements. By 2000, street artists had formed a global urban network of knowledge and practice disseminated by proliferating Web sites, publications and collective nomadic projects.

Whether the street works seem utopian or anarchic, aggressive or sympathetic, stunningly well-executed or juvenile, original or derivative, most street artists seriously working in the genre begin with a deep identification and empathy with the city: they are compelled to state something *in* and *with* the city, whether as forms of protest, critique, irony, humor, beauty, subversion, clever prank or all of the above. The pieces can be ephemeral, gratuitous acts of beauty or forms of counter-iconography, inhabiting spaces of abandonment and decay, or signal jams in a zone of hyper-commercial messaging. A well-placed street piece will reveal the meaning of its material context, making the invisible visible again, a city re-imaged and re-imagined. A street work can be an intervention, a collaboration, a commentary, a dialogic critique, an individual or collective manifesto, an assertion of existence, aesthetic therapy for the *dysaesthetics* of urban controlled, commercialized visibility and a Whitmanian hymn with the raw energy of pent-up democratic desires for expression and self-assertion.

Whatever the medium and motives of the work, the city is the assumed interlocutor, framework and essential precondition for making the artwork *work*. (See especially the examples in Figures 10.1–10.7, 10.9, 10.14–10.22, and 10.27, 10.28.)

In the context of art theory in the institutional art world, street art and artists seem made-to-order for a time when there is no acknowledged 'period' identity for contemporary art and no consensus on a possible role for an avant-garde.[4] Yet the reception of street art in the institutional art world remains problematic and caught in a generational shift: the street art movement embodies many of the anti-institutional arguments elaborated in the art world over the past fifty years, but it hasn't been adopted as a category for advancing art-institutional replication, the prime objective of the art professions. Art world institutions prefer their avant-garde arguments and institutional critiques to be conducted intramurally within established disciplinary practices. Even though no art student today experiences art and visual culture without a knowledge of street art, most art school programs continue an academic platform invested in playing out some remaining possibilities in a postmodern remix of Performance Art, Conceptual Art, Appropriation Art, Institutional Critique and conceptual directions in photography, film and digital media. Critics, curators and academic theorists now routinely discuss art forms that are 'post-medium', 'post-studio' and 'post-institutional', precisely the starting point of street art.

Street art is also a valuable case for the ongoing debate about the material and historical conditions of visual culture, and whether the concept of 'visual culture', as constructed in recent visual culture studies, dematerializes visual experience into an ahistorical, trans-media abstraction.[5] The pan-digital media platforms that we experience daily on computer and TV screens and on every conceivable device create the illusion of a disembodied, abstract, transmedia and dematerialized visual environment, where images, video, graphics and text converge and coexist in the field of the flat-panel frame. Street artists are making statements about visual culture and the effects of controlled visibility in the lived environment of the city, where walls and screens are increasingly intermingled. Shepard Fairey frequently remarks that one of his main motivations was inserting images in urban space that challenged the corporate-government monopoly of visible expression, creating a disturbance where 'there can be other images coexisting with advertising' (Fairey 2009: 94). Street art inserts itself in the material city as an argument about *visuality*, the social and political structure of *being visible*. Street art works by being confrontationally material and location-specific while also participating in the global, networked, Web-distributable cultural encyclopedia.

The social meaning of street art is a function of material locations with all their already structured symbolic values. The city location is an inseparable substrate for the work, and street art is explicitly an engagement with a city, often a specific neighborhood. Street artists are adept masters of the semiotics of space, and engage with the city itself as a collage or assemblage of visual environments and source material (Ellin 1999: 280–8; Rowe and Koetter 1979; see Figures 10.7, 10.8, 10.19, 10.21, 10.22, and 10.27). A specific site, street, wall or building in London, New York, Paris or Washington, DC, is already encoded as a symbolic place, the dialogic context for the

placement of the piece by the artist. The practice is grounded in urban 'operational space', the 'practiced place' as described by de Certeau (de Certeau 1984)—not the abstract space of geometry, urban planning or the virtual space of the screen, but the space created by lived experience, defined by people mapping their own movements and daily relationships to perceived centres of power through the streets, neighborhoods and transit networks of the city. Street art provides an intuitive break from the accelerated 'aesthetics of disappearance', in Paul Virilio's terms, a signal-hack in a mass-mediated environment where what we see in the regime of screen visibility is always the *absence* of material objects (Virilio 2009; Armitage and Virilio 1999). The placement of works is often a call to *place*, marking locations with awareness, over against the proliferating urban 'nonplaces' of anonymous transit and commerce—the mall, the airport, Starbucks, big box stores—as described by Marc Augé (Augé 2009). Street art is driven by the aesthetics of material *reappearance*.

CONTEXTS OF STREET ART 1990–2010: RECEPTION, THEORY AND PRACTICE

The genealogy of street art is now well documented.[6] Every art movement has its own myths of origin and foundational moments, but the main continuity from the early graffiti movements of the 1970s and 1980s to the diverse group of cross-over artists and urban interventionists recognized in the 1990s (Blek le Rat, Barry McGee, Shepard Fairey, Ron English, Banksy, WK Interact, José Parlá, Swoon) and the new cohort of artists recognized since 2000 (for example Os Gemeos, Judith Supine, Blu, Vhils, JR, Gaia) is the audacity of the *act* itself. The energy and conceptual force of the work often relies on the act of 'getting up'—the work as performance, an event, undertaken with a gamble and a risk, taking on the uncertain safety of neighborhoods, the conditions of buildings and the policing of property (see Castleman 1984). As ephemeral and contingent performance, the action is the message: the marks and images appear as traces, signs and records of the act, and are as immediately persuasive as they are recognizable.

The history and reception of street art, including what the category means, is a casebook of political, social and legal conflicts, as well as disputes in the artists' own subcultures. Political tensions remain extreme over graffiti, and urban communities worldwide are conflicted about the reception of street art in the context of the graffiti and 'broken windows' debates,[7] and whether there can be any social differentiation among kinds of street works. Many street artists working now have 'graduated' from simple graffiti as name or slogan writing to a focused practice involving many kinds of image and graphic techniques.[8] By 2000, most street artists saw their work as an art practice subsuming mixed methods and hybrid genres, executed and produced both on and off the street. The 'street' is now simply assumed and subsumed wherever the work is done.

A useful differentiator for street artists is the use of walls as mural space. By the early 1990s, the mass media had disseminated the graffiti styles in New York and Los

Angeles, and some of the most visually striking images of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 were its miles of graffiti and mural art. Throughout the 1990s, street art as city mural art was spreading across Europe and to South America, especially Brazil, home of the Os Gemeos brothers, who combined influences from hip-hop, Brazilian folk culture and artistic friendships with Barry McGee and other artists from Europe and the USA (Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010: 358–63). In the past fifteen years, many street artists have gone from underground, usually anonymous, hit and run, provocateurs pushing the boundaries of vandalism and toleration of private property trespass to highly recognized art stars invited to create legal, commissioned wall murals and museum installations (see Figures 10.12–10.17 and 10.23–10.26). Banksy, though by no means a paradigm case, went from merry prankster, vandal and nuisance to an art world showman and post-Warholian career manager with works now protected on the streets and studio objects in high demand by collectors, auction houses and museum curators. The global community of artists is now a network of nonlinear relationships that grow and cluster nodally by city identity, techniques and philosophy of art practice.

While artists as diverse as Blek le Rat, Barry McGee, Dan Witz, Ron English, Shepard Fairey, Swoon, José Parlá, David Ellis, Os Gemeos and Gaia have developed important conceptual arguments for their work (whether explicit or implicit), street artists mainly work intuitively in a community of practice with multiple sources of cultural history, not through formalized theory. But the levels of sophistication in their work reveal conceptual affinities and sometimes direct, intentional alliances with prior art movements. Where Pop opened a new conceptual space anticipated by Duchamp and Dada, inaugurating new arguments for what art could be, street artists took those arguments as already made (and over with), and ran with them out the institutional doors and into the streets. Street art became the next step in transformative logic of Pop: a redirected act of transubstantiation that converts the raw and non-art-differentiated space of public streets into new territories of visual engagement, anti-art performative acts that result in a new art category. Like Pop, street art de-aestheticizes 'high art' as one of many types of source material, and goes further by aestheticizing zones formerly outside culturally recognized art space. The 'extramural' zones of non-art space and the logic of the art container are now turned inside out: what was once banished from the walls of the art institutions (schools, museums, galleries) is reflected back on the walls of the city. Street art thrives on the paradox of being the mural art of the *extramuros*, outside the institutional walls.

Street artists are also being discussed as inheritors of earlier art movements, especially the ideas that emerged within Dada and Situationism: viewing art as act, event, performance, and intervention, a *détournement*—a hijacking, rerouting, displacement and misappropriation of received culture for other ends.[9] Street artists reenact the play and spontaneity envisioned by Debord and described by de Certeau, escaping the functionalism and purposiveness of urban order by deviation and wandering (*derivé*) across multiple zones, rejecting and modifying the prescribed uses of the urban environment (Knabb 2006). Parallel with some forms of performance and conceptual art, street artists are at home with the fragment, the ephemeral mark

and images that engage the public in time-bound situations. Street art extends several important post-Pop and postmodern strategies that are now the common vocabulary of contemporary art: photo-reproduction, repetition, the grid, serial imagery, appropriation and inversions of high and low cultural codes. Repetition and serial forms are now embedded in the visible grid of the city.

Street artists take the logic of appropriation, remix and hybridity in every direction: arguments, ideas, actions, performances, interventions, inversions and subversions are always being extended into new spaces, remixed for contexts and forms never anticipated in earlier postmodern arguments. Street art also assumes a foundational dialogism in which each new act of making a work and inserting it into a street context is a response, a reply, an engagement with prior works and the ongoing debate about the public visual surface of a city. As dialogue-in-progress, it anticipates a response, public discourse, commentary, new works. The city is seen as a living historical palimpsest open for new inscription, re-write culture in practice (see Figures 10.1, 10.4–10.7, 10.20, 10.27, 10.28).

Street art continually reveals that no urban space is neutral: walls and street topography are boundaries for socially constructed zones and territories, and vertical space is regulated by regimes of visibility. Leaving a visual mark in public urban space is usually technically illegal and often performed as an act of nonviolent civil disobedience. The artists understand that publically viewable space, normally regulated by property and commercial regimes for controlling visibility, can be appropriated for unconstrained, uncontainable, antagonist acts. From the most recent stencil works and paste-ups on a city building in publically viewable space to formal objects made in artists' studios or site-specific projects in galleries and museums, each location is framed by institutions, legal regimes, public policies, cultural categories—frequently overlapping and cooperating, often contradictory in a nonharmonizing coexistence.

Several techniques, mediums and styles now converge in practice: stylized spray-can graphics and spray drawings from graffiti conventions; found and appropriated imagery from popular culture, advertising and mass photographic images re-produced in stencil imagery or other printing techniques; design, graphics and illustration styles merging everything from punk and underground subcultures to high culture design and typography traditions; many forms of print-making techniques from Xerox and screen printing to hand-cut woodblocks and linocuts; direct wall painting, both free-hand and from projected images; and many forms of stencil techniques ranging from rough hand-cuts to multiple layers of elaborate machine-cut imagery. A wall piece in New York, Los Angeles, London or Paris can combine stencil imagery with spray paint, pre-printed artist-designed paste-ups, photocopy blow-ups and collage imagery, and all imaginable hybrids of print making, drawing and direct wall painting. Unifying practices are montage and collage, shifting scale (up or down) and using the power of serial imagery and repetition in multiple contexts. The photographic and digital photographic sources of images are taken for granted.

Many artists associated with the movement are beyond category, and experiment with installations, material interventions and many hybrid genres. Vhils carves imagery

into walls and buildings, recalling some of Gordon Matta-Clark's deconstructions of built spaces. José Parlá creates wall murals and multilayered panels and canvases as visual memory devices, palimpsests of urban mark-making, material history, graffiti morphed into calligraphy and a direct confrontation of AbEx action painting with the decay of the streets and the life of city walls. David Ellis makes films of extended action painting performances and creates kinetic sculptures programmed to make found materials and instruments dance in a call and response with the rhythms of the city. Shepard Fairey channels popular culture images through multiple stylistic registers, including Socialist Realism, constructivist and modernist graphic design, rock poster designs and Pop styles all merged and output as posters and screen prints for street paste-ups, murals and hand-cut stencil and collage works on canvas, panel and fine art papers. While there is no easy unifying term for all these practices, concepts and material implementations, theory and practice are as tightly worked out in street art as in any art movement already institutionalized in art history.

STREET ART AND THE GLOBAL CITY: ALL-CITY TO ALL-CITIES

> Society has been completely urbanized ... The street is a place to play and learn. The street is disorder ... This disorder is alive. It informs. It surprises ... The urban space of the street is a place for talk, given over as much to the exchange of words and signs as it is to the exchange of things. A place where speech becomes writing. A place where speech can become 'savage' and, by escaping rules and institutions, inscribe itself on walls.
>
> —*Henri Lefebvre*, The Urban Revolution, *1970 (Lefebvre (1970) 2003: 19)*

> Street art is truly the first global art movement fuelled by the Internet.
>
> *—Marc and Sara Schiller, Wooster Collective, 2010*
> *(Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010: 141)*

More than 75 per cent of the developed world now lives in cities and urban agglomerations; lesser developed regions are moving in the same direction.[10] The future is the global networked world city. Although the globalization of the 'network society' is unevenly distributed, globalization is primarily enacted through a network of cities.[11] One of its effects is a change in the idea of the city itself, a regional site incorporating vast amounts of population mobility, flows of intellectual and material capital, expanding beyond historic and local identity politics. All art movements have developed in cities, but street art is distinctive in having emerged as a direct engagement with the postmodern city: the artists and the works presuppose a dialogic relationship, a necessary entailment, with the material and symbolic world of the city.

Though closely tied to locations and the temporal performative act, the practices of street art as well as the works themselves vacillate between the specific materiality of urban space, street locations, local contexts, and the exhibition, distribution and

communication platform of the Internet and Web. Street artists since around 2000 continually code-switch back and forth between the city as a material structure and the 'city of bits',[12] the city as information node, the virtual 'space of flows' (Castells 2000, 1989), networked and renderable in multiple digital visualizations. With proliferating Web sites and popular media coverage, most street artists are not only aware of being seen on a global stage, speaking locally and globally, but they actively contribute to the global Web museum without walls, documenting their work digitally as it is executed. First and foremost, there is the material moment, the physical act of *doing* the art in a specific location and with specific materials (spray paint, stencils, print and poster paste-ups, direct painting and every conceivable variation). But more and more, street art is being made and performed to be captured in digital form for distribution on Web sites and YouTube—the work of art in the age of instant digital dissemination.[13]

Street art has emerged in this moment of accelerated and interconnected urbanization, and it's no surprise that street art is most visible in global world cities where concentrations of people, capital, built infrastructure and flows of information are the densest. In many ways, street art is a response to this concentrated infrastructure with its unequal distribution of resources, property and visibility. Street art reflects globalization while resisting being absorbed into its convenient categories. Street artists interrupt the totalizing sense of space produced in modern cities with a local, place-bound gesture, an act that says 'we're here with this message now'. Street artist are also known for travelling to specific locations to do their work in as many contexts as possible, documenting the work for Web sites as they go. The work is fundamentally nomadic and ephemeral, destabilizing in its instability.

For New York graffiti writers in the 1970s, having your name seen 'all-city' (the trains traversing every borough) was 'the *faith* of graffiti' (Mailer and Naar 2010). This faith has now been transferred to visibility 'all-cities' through the many Web sites and blogs that document and archive street art, most of which are organized by city. Since the late 1990s, the imagery and practices of street artists have been spreading around the world at Internet speed, artists tracking each others' work, styles, techniques, walls and sites. The Art Crimes Web site, the first graffiti site in the Internet, launched in 1995, and the Wooster Collective, now a leading aggregator of all categories of street art, started in 2001 (Art Crimes Collective 1995; Wooster Collective 2001; Howze 2002). Through individual and collective artists' Web sites, Flickr image galleries, Google Maps tagging and blogs, the faith of street art has migrated to the digital city, achieving visibility all-cities.

EXTRAMUROS/INTRAMUROS: STREETS, CITIES, WALLS

> I've always paid a great deal of attention to what happens on walls. When I was young, I often even copied graffiti.
>
> —*Picasso (Brassaï 1999: 254)*

> [Modern paintings] are like so many interpretations, if not imitations, of a wall.
>
> —*Brassaï (Brassaï 2002: 13)*

> A good city is a city with graffiti.
>
> —*Miss Van, 2007 (Neelon 2007)*

De Certeau cites a statement by Erasmus, 'the city is a huge monastery' (de Certeau 1984: 93), a reference to the premodern image of the walled city and the walled monastery as boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. The metaphors of *intramuros* and *extramuros*, inside and outside the walls, run deep in Western culture. They name both material and symbolic spaces, zones of authority and hierarchies of identity (Brighenti 2009a,b). The premodern metaphors remain in many institutions—schools, colleges and universities, and urban space itself. Paris, arguably the home of the modern idea of the city, still retains the idea of metropolitan expansion zones *extramuros*, the *banlieues*, outside the historic, and once walled, city centre. In modern cities without the internalized history of the classical and medieval defensive walls, the structure of streets and buildings, highways and train yards creates marked boundaries, territories, zones and demarcations of hierarchical space, a psychogeography of spaces. Street artists have a well-developed practice for placing works in this structured space, where the well-chosen placement of a work often builds more credit than the work itself.

Surfaces that form the visible city are vertical: visibility becomes a contest for using and regulating vertical space. The wall is a metaphor for verticality—buildings, street layout and boundary walls form the topography of the visible in public space, or more appropriately, *publically viewable*, space (see Brighenti 2009a,b). Vertical space is highly valuable in modern cities, driving the value of 'air rights' above a property and the vertical surfaces which can be leased for advertising. When concentrated in spaces like Times Square in New York, Potsdamer Platz in Berlin and Shibuya Crossing in Tokyo, advertising surfaces achieve the status of totalizing spectacles, walled enclaves of manufactured and regulated visuality.

One of the major obsessions of modern art theory has been the cultural wall: the problem of institutional walls, the over-determined modernist 'white cube' of four gallery walls (O'Doherty 1999), the bourgeois commoditization of wall-mountable works representing symbolic capital in domestic space, the conceptual use of art institution walls as an abstract surface for ephemeral works requiring no permanent or durable material form, walls as boundaries, limits, enclosures, territories, zones and concepts of art on, off or outside the walls. This theorizing is enacted as a series of arguments that presuppose, and only make sense within, the intramural art world. For many avant-gardes, the bourgeois domestic gallery or museum interior, a wall system for objects, provides the scene for irony and subversions precisely because it is everywhere stable, entailed, presupposed, always-already there. For conceptual art, it was the question of the objecthood of the work, its independence from wall space other than as a structure of verticality to be used, or not, in the installation of a work.

Performance art challenged everything except the presupposition of the constitutive intramural art space for the recognition, reception and visibility of the art act as *art*.[14]

In a recent essay, Mel Bochner reflected on the move in the 1970s and 1980s to draw and paint directly on walls, redirecting the question of art as object to one of concept on surface (Bochner 2009). It was still a question of intramural art institution walls, and one that had been already raised in Andy Warhol's famous show at Leo Castelli's in 1966 when he covered every wall in the gallery with Pop-coloured cow wallpaper, using actual printed wallpaper, and taking object-less flatness all the way. Bochner reflects that Warhol's move combined with the impact of the graffiti written in the May 1968 Paris student uprising signalled a new awareness of direct encounters with the inscribed surface of a wall: it is immediate and temporal. 'These works cannot be "held"; they can only be seen.' Bochner's concluding observation could easily be expressed by a street artist: 'By collapsing the space between the artwork and the viewer, a wall painting negates the gap between lived time and pictorial time, permitting the work to engage larger philosophical, social, and political issues' (Bochner 2009: 140). OK, the street artist would say, but reverse the orientation of the walls: what was formerly a debate about work done in institutional art space has now been turned outward into public space, or, more fully, let's erase the zones and demarcations and acknowledge a continuum between art-institutional space and the public space surrounding everyday life.

Let's consider a few routes through which street art wall practices were anticipated but not fulfilled by avant-garde attempts to break the wall system. I'm not interested in developing myths of origin or a genealogy of practices that could legitimize street art in an art historical narrative, as if street art were a long-repressed, internalized 'other' finally bursting out on its own. Rather, when read dialogically, the moves, strategies and arguments being restated in street art practice become visible as intuitive and conceptual acts with equal sophistication and awareness of consequences.

We can trace a nonlinear cluster of concepts and practices extending from postwar neo-Dadaist artists down to the 1980s and the art world reception of Basquiat, Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger, whose works, as different as they are in medium and concepts, presuppose the *intramuros/extramuros* symbolic system. Conceptual and strategic connections to recent street art practice are found in Robert Rauschenberg's image transfers and assemblage works, Cy Twombly's large mural paintings of writing and graffiti gestures, the works of the *décollage* artists begun in the late 1940s, especially by Jacques Villeglé in Paris, and the 'matter' and wall paintings by Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona in the 1950s–1980s. An ur-text for the tradition is Brassaï's *Graffiti*, photographs of the paint marks, image scratches and writings on Paris walls from the 1930s–1950s, the first collection of which was published in 1961 with an introduction by Picasso (Brassaï 2002). Known as the photographer of the Paris streets, Brassaï made photographing graffiti a life-long project. The Museum of Modern Art presented an exhibition of Brassaï's graffiti photographs in 1956 and the Bibliothèque Nationale organized a Brassaï retrospective in Paris in 1964, both of which had a major influence on artists and the modernist discourse about primitivism, outsider art and the unselfconscious expression of the untrained savant. The art world debate about walls,

graffiti and the authentic outsider provided one context for the reception of Basquiat and Haring in the post-Pop 1980s. Also beginning in the 1980s, Barbara Kruger extended the debate about walls and appropriated images for a feminist conceptual critique that both crossed the wall boundaries and disrupted the white cube of gallery space by presenting all walls, ceilings and floors as a continuous surface of image and text.

Artists in the Abstract Expressionist and Neo-Dadaist traditions quoted or appropriated the *look* or the Romantic *myth* of graffiti as a gesture to be incorporated in large, mural paintings. The appropriation made sense only as a move in a specific kind of argument about painting that involved breaking down the pictorial surface with graphism, writing and symbols, usually with a down-skilling or deskilling of mark-marking and other nonpictorial elements. Cy Twombly's works in the 1950s show the transference of street wall acts and gestures, 'surrogate graffiti', 'like anonymous drawings on walls'.[15] Twombly's 'allusions' to writing on walls and blackboards were a means to smuggle graffiti gestures into painting as a sign of the primitive, raw, spontaneous and pre-formal, writing overtaking pictorial space.[16] Rauschenberg, who initially appeared in shows with Twombly, constructed combine and collage works incorporating nearly all possible graphic gestures and image appropriations in wall-like systems (Mattison 2003: 41–104). Rauschenberg's deconstructed image- and sign-bearing materials were the escape hatch that launched appropriation art as an ongoing encounter with what is found in the city. As Leo Steinberg noted, 'Rauschenberg's picture plane is for the consciousness immersed in the brain of the city' (Steinberg 1972). At the time, a similar move inside painting was developed by Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona, whose paintings appropriated the materiality of the city wall with its codes for communal inscription and palimpsest history.

What emerged in the 1950s–1960s as a formal argument *about* painting 'degree-zero', a reduction of means to the baseline materiality of surfaces, a reduction down to the bare walls as a minimal signifying unit of plane space, was converted into a material practice by street artists in the 1980s–1990s. Instead of smuggling in nonart acts on walls as a disruptive move within the grand narrative of painting, street art starts from the reversed wall, the interchange and promiscuous mix of cultures *intra-* and *extramuros*, as the now always-already state of the world's imaging system. The reversal reveals the urban wall as we've already known it, though often occluded in misrecognition: the wall as the primary signifying space of the human built environment, the picturing plane *par excellence*, a kind of deep structure in the generative grammar of visuality, part of a centuries-long cultural unconscious. We can't get over the wall.

This awareness of the signifying materiality of the urban wall was explored persuasively by two other artists in the 1950s–1960s, Jacques Villeglé and Antoni Tàpies, artists who have continued their practice to the present day. Villeglé's works are made of, or from, torn street posters, a move that both scaled up and reversed the process of Dadist collage and redirected the anonymity of posters pasted and torn away by the hands of passersby.[17] Villeglé usually named his *decollage* pieces by the streets,

squares or metro stations from which he extracted the found and torn posters, many of which had graffiti and other paste-up additions added by others. He 'deglued' the street-scale posters and papers and then reapplied them to canvas and paper supports to be mounted on exhibition walls, thus reversing nonart/art wall spaces and allowing the extramural realm of anonymous, layered public walls to penetrate the intramural space of the gallery, museum and art collection. It was a move that inserted a *sign* of the ephemeral, public street experience without engaging in its practice. This technique is now used by many street artists who create studio-produced canvases and wood panel works using various collage techniques with found and prepared papers.

Antoni Tàpies, the Catalonian artist known for his interpretation of Dada, *art brut* and *art informel* (formlessness), transposed the function of city walls onto his canvases, often marking them with raw graffiti gestures, crosses, Xs, and ritual and territorial marks.[18] His appropriation of the city wall went back to growing up in Barcelona and experiencing the city walls as both a cultural identity and a tableau on which the daily violence of fascist oppression was inscribed and memorialized in the 1930s–1940s. For him, the direct marks in matter were signs of the undeniable presence of human action, the traces of history and memory imposed materially and directly, and not through illusionistic images which can only be signifiers of absence. He turned the external inscribed surface of walls *inward*, into interior space and the inward space of symbols and meditation. In the 1950s he discovered Brassaï's photographs of graffiti and the theories accompanying the reception of Brassaï's work, further motivating his move to making paintings as quotations from walls.

Tàpies inserted the materiality of old, marked city walls into painting, using marble dust, sand and clay; he marked the materials like territory identity signs, but limited to the demarcated surface of a painting. In his essay 'Communication on the Wall' (1969), he recalled a turning point in the 1950s: 'the most sensational surprise was to discover one day, suddenly, that my paintings ... had turned into walls'.[19] Reversing exterior walls to interior reflection, Tàpies represents walls not simply as material barriers but as the medium for public marks of human struggle, presence, mortality and collective memory. The secular extramural ritual of adding human presence to the palimpsest wall in nonart space has been turned around to present itself in the intramural art space of the studio, museum, gallery and art collection. *Mutatis mutandis*, street artists in Barcelona have extended Tàpies's project by executing some of the most striking street mural art in the world (see Figures 10.27 and 10.28).[20]

Around 1980, Basquiat made the transition from graffiti and his SAMO street identity to working out his famous street/studio fusion with lessons learned from the early Pollock, Dubuffet, Twombly, Rauschenberg and Picasso (Marshall 1992; Mercurio 2007; Cortez et al. 2007). He reversed the walls again, eagerly joining the prestige system of the art world, and was at home with large-scale mural paintings, creating paintings that were walls of brut imagery, graphics and writing. When Basquiat abandoned his street work for the intramural art world, there was an enthusiastic embrace of his outsider cross-over status, as if he came from a curatorial central casting agency. He emerged at a moment when 'outsider' and 'primitive' art were established as art market and curatorial categories, and when the first wave of

graffiti art had crossed over into the gallery system. Basquiat's and Keith Haring's works were also received as viable moves within a post-Pop continuum, both artists benefitting from art world and popular culture myths of the Romantic outsider artist. The next generation of street artists moved beyond the wall problematic of the art world, and energetically embraced working as outsiders. The nonart space of city walls remained open for intervention, and the rest is now history.

Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger, important wall-breakers in other directions, should be cited as concluding examples of artists who intervened in the mediated city and the urban wall messaging system. Both artists rose to international attention in the 1980s simultaneously with Basquiat and Haring, and both began by responding to the cultural messaging system of New York City. Jenny Holzer began her LED aphorism and posters in the late 1970s as interventions in public space, and she then developed her signature style of large-scale text projections on city buildings and messages on appropriated billboards.[21] Barbara Kruger has produced a large body of work that combines collaged or photomontaged appropriated images from mass media with slogans in the Futura Bold type font directed towards a feminist critique of consumer culture. Her works are like scaled-up magazine advertising spreads, and she often installs her work like walls of posters and billboards, at times covering entire floors and ceilings of gallery rooms.[22] She has also produced works installed in public spaces, including billboards, posters, bus stops and exterior museum installations.[23] Shepard Fairey and others have acknowledged Holzer and Kruger as major influences for using text messages and appropriated, stylistically encoded mass media imagery in works created for multiple spaces of reception (Fairey 2009: 34; Spears 2010; Revelli and Fairey 2010: 44–55).

Street artists have broken the wall system even further by including the social *intramuros/extramuros* partitions as part of their subject matter. Public spaces and city walls have become a heuristics laboratory for experimentation and discovery, the results of which are brought back into studio art making, and vice versa. For many artists today, making new art is not only about negotiating with 'art history', but about engaging with the history of every mark, sign and image left in the vast, global, encyclopedic memory machine of the city. The street, studio and gallery installation spaces now continually intersect and presuppose one another; artworks are made for the spaces that frame them. As Alexandre Farto (Vhils) explains, 'I don't discriminate between outside and inside. I think it's more about the way you embrace a particular space and what you want to question with it' (Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010: 10). Likewise, José Parlá 'never saw the difference' between doing his illegal street work and his experiments on canvas when he started painting in the late 1980s: 'my generation grew up seeing … Jean-Michel Basquiat, Futura and Phase2 and their gallery exhibitions around the world … Regardless of the surface, for me it was all just art—and that's it' (Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010: 27).

The cultural wall system is capable of many reversals and inversions precisely because the major art and property regimes are defined by secular extensions of the rule of *intramuros* and *extramuros*. Within the institutional boundaries of the art world system, we learn what the category of art is, what is excluded and excludable (the

extramuros) and what is included and includable. Visibility regimes remain embedded in our material and symbolic wall systems like resident software always functioning as a background process. The art world had a dream of art forms that subverted the received structures and boundaries, but never imagined that outsiders would actually be doing it. Dada didn't overturn the intramural idea of art; it required and presupposed it. Dada was the theory; street art is the practice.

STREET ART AND REWRITING THE CITY

> The way I look at the landscape is forever changed because of street art.
>
> —*Shepard Fairey, 2010*[24]

Much of street art practice follows the logic of transgressions, appropriations and tactics described in Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*.[25] De Certeau describes how ordinary urban citizens navigate and negotiate their positions in power systems that mark up city space. Breaking up the totalizing notion of those dominated by power as passive consumers, de Certeau shows that daily life is *made*, a creative production, constantly appropriating and reappropriating the products, messages, spaces for expression and territories of others. For de Certeau, the term 'consumer' is a useless, reductionist euphemism that obscures the complexities of daily practice. Consumers are more appropriately users and re-producers. 'Everyday life invents itself by *poaching* in countless ways on the property of others' (de Certeau 1984: xii). Street art and urban artist collectives are acts of engagement and reorganization, a therapeutics based on reappropriations and redeployments of the dominant image economy and hierarchical distribution of space experienced in metropolitan environments.

De Certeau described the strategy of city dwellers in their 'reading' of received culture with its normative messages and the active 'writing' back of new and oppositional uses that become community identity positions (de Certeau 1984: xxi). He anticipated the idea of 'read-write' culture, the post-Internet context of all art practice, which involves 'reading' transmitted information and 'rewriting' it back to the cultural archive, reusing it by interpretation and new context, the remix of the received and the re-produced.[26] Street art lives at the read-write intersection of the city as geopolitical territory and the global city of bits. Not only are the material surfaces of buildings and walls rewritten, but street art presupposes the global remix and reappropriation of imagery and ideas transferred or created in digital form and distributable on the Internet. Remix culture scans the received culture encyclopedia for what can be reinterpreted, rewritten and reimaged now. Displacements, dislocations and relocations are normative generative practices.

Many street artists are nomads, moving around when possible in this connected and rapidly continuous *intermural* global city. This is a very new kind of art practice, doing works in multiple cities and documenting them in real time on the Web. Nomadic street artists are now imagining the global city as a distributed surface on

which to mark and inscribe visual interventions that function both locally and globally. The act and gesture performed in one location can now be viewed from any other city location, and documented, archived, compared, imitated, remixed, with any kind of dialogic response. Banksy's stencil works have appeared on Palestinian border walls as well as on the walls and buildings of most major cities, instantly viewable through a Google image search. Reading and rewriting the city has been globalized; the post-Internet generations of artists navigate material and digital cities in an experiential continuum. The art of the extramural world has reconceived both material and conceptual walls and spaces: the extramural has become post-mural.

THE CONTEST OF VISIBILITY

> The future of art is not artistic, but urban.
>
> —*Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1996: 173)*

New York, London, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Paris, Melbourne, Rio and Sao Paulo are palimpsests of visual information in the consumerist attention economy, every visual signifier discharged in a real-time competition and rivalry for observers' attention. World cities have known territories and hierarchies, peripheries and zones for industry or marginalized classes, all of which are assumed and exploited in street art. For street artists, a city is an information engine: the daily flows of people for work, leisure and consumption are information; the invisible communications network infrastructure not only transmits information but its very density is itself information; streets, alleys, the built environment is information; the presence or absence of buildings are information; the commercial messaging systems in signs, advertising, logos, billboards and giant light panels both transmit and are themselves information. Some of the information becomes communication, addressable messages to passersby, advertising hailing us all to look and receive. Ubiquitous, street-level, vertical advertising spaces are a normative experience in every city, a protected zone of visuality now nearly inseparable from urban life itself (see Figures 10.10 and 10.11).

Street art is thus always an assertion, a competition, for *visibility*; urban public space is always a competition for power by managing the power of visibility (See Brighenti 2007, 2009a; Brighenti and Mattiucci 2009). To be visible is to be known, to be recognized, to exist. Recognition is both an internal code within the community of practice of street artists, and the larger social effect sought by the works as acts in public, or publically viewable, space (see Figures 10.15–10.26). The acts of visibility, separable from the anonymity of many streets artists, become part of the social symbolic world, and finally, of urban ritual, repetitions that instantiate communal beliefs and bonds of identity.

Street art contests two main regimes of visibility—legal and governmental on one side, and art world or social aesthetic on the other—which creates the conditions within which it must compete for visibility. Street art works against the regimes of government, law and aesthetics as accepted, self-evident systems that normalize a common world by unconscious rules of visibility and recognition. In each regime,

there are rules and codes for what can be made visible or perceptible, who has the legitimacy to be seen and heard where, and who can be rendered invisible as merely the background noise of urban life. Jacques Rancière has noted how politics is enacted by 'the partition of the perceptible' (French, *partage du sensible*), how the regulation, division or distribution of visibility itself distributes power: 'Politics is first of all a way of framing, among sensory data, a specific sphere of experience. It is a partition of the sensible, of the visible and the sayable, which allows (or does not allow) some specific data to appear; which allows or does not allow some specific subjects to designate them and speak about them' (Rancière 2004b: 10). Advertising and commercial messaging space are made to appear as a guaranteed, normalized partition of the visible in the legal regime. Street artists intuitively contest this rationing or apportioning out of visibility by intervening in a publically visible way. Street art thus appears at the intersection of two regimes, two ways of distributing visibility—the governmental regime (politics, law, property) and the aesthetic regime (the art world and the boundary maintenance between art and nonart).

The contest of visibility is clearly marked in the visual regimes for commercial communication. As de Certeau observed, 'from TV to newspapers, from advertising to all sorts of mercantile epiphanies, our society is characterized by a cancerous growth of vision, measuring everything by its ability to show or be shown and transmuting communication into a visual journey. It is a sort of epic of the eye and of the impulse to read' (de Certeau 1984: xxi). Every day, we consume more visual messages than products. Street advertising has to be instantly recognizable, but with image saturation, it's also instantly disengageable, a contest between meaning and noise. All advertising messages are constructed to *interpellate* us, calling us out to take up the position of the advertising addressee—the consumer, the passive receiver.[27] Street art pushes back with alternative subject positions for inhabitants and citizens, confusing the message system by offering the alternative subjectivity of gift-receiver, and blurring the lines between producers and receivers.

Street artists often talk about their work as a reaction to the domination of urban visual space by advertising in a closed property regime. Street art is a response to experiencing public spaces as being implicitly, structurally, forms of advertising, embodying the codes for socialization in the political economy. In attempts to maximize the commercial appeal of city centres, many cities have government-sponsored urban projects that turn urban zones into theme parks with carefully controlled visual information necessary for sustaining a tourist simulacrum. As Baudrillard noted, 'today what we are experiencing is the absorption of all virtual modes of expression into that of advertising' (Baudrillard 1995: 87). Not merely messages for products and services, but a social messaging system, 'vaguely seductive, vaguely consensual', that replaces lived social experience with a fantasy of a consumerist community. The code of advertising is socialization to the message system: 'a sociality everywhere present, an absolute sociality finally realized in absolute advertising … a vestige of sociality hallucinated on all the walls in the simplified form of a demand of the social that is immediately met by the echo of advertising. The social as a script, whose bewildered audience we are' (Baudrillard 1995: 88).

Street art works to scramble this script, jam the communiqué, or expose its falsely transparent operation, allowing viewers to adopt different positions, no longer simply *subjects of* a message. Street art is a direct engagement with a city's messaging system, a direct hit on the unconscious, accepted, seemingly natural spaces in which visual messages can appear. Street artists intervene with a counter-imagery, acts of displacement in an ongoing generative 'semeiocracy', the politics of meaning-making through images and writing in contexts that bring the contest over visibility into the open. Walls and structures can be de-purposed, repurposed, de-faced, refaced, de-made, remade.

Ron English, Shepard Fairey, Banksy and many others have made explicit subversion of advertising space one of their main tactics. Ron English has high-jacked more than 1,000 billboards with his Pop 'subvertisements', becoming the exemplar of the culture-jamming potential of street art.[28] This approach has been the main motivation for Shepard Fairey's long-running 'Obey' campaign: images and slogans that provoke awareness about public messages and advertising (Fairey 2009: ii–v and passim). Though criticized for being simplistic, Fairey's message targets the consumer subject directly: 'keep your eyes and mind open, and question everything' (Fairey 2009: xvi). Swoon takes a subtler but still pointed approach: 'Lately I have wanted to give all of my attention to reflecting our humanness, our fragility and strength, back out at us from our city walls in a way that makes all of these fake images screaming at us from billboards seem irrelevant and cruel, which is what they are' (in Ganz and MacDonald 2006: 204).

In terms of visual communication space, privatized commercial messages are endlessly displayed on industrial scale on billboards, street posters and kiosks, and huge lighted signs. The visual space of many cities is given over to advertising in protected spaces rented from property owners. As de Certeau observed in 'The Imaginary of the City', an 'imaginary discourse of commerce is pasted over every square inch of public walls'. The visible spaces of inscription for commerce, of course, can reveal precisely where artists' interventions will be most visible as a counter-imaginary language:

> [Commercial imagery] is a *mural language* with the repertory of its immediate objects of happiness. It conceals the buildings in which labor is confined; it covers over the closed universe of everyday life; it sets in place artificial forms that follow the paths of labor in order to juxtapose their passageways to the successive moments of pleasure. A city that is a real 'imaginary museum' forms the counterpoint of the city at work. (de Certeau 1997: 20)

This view is precisely what motivates many street artists: the city as a competitive space of mural messaging, walls and nonneutral spaces with a potential for bearing messages. Street artists seize the spaces of visibility for the messaging system. As Swoon stated in 2003 on the methods of her Brooklyn collective, 'we scour the city for the ways that we are spoken to, and we speak back … Once you start listening, the walls don't shut up.'[29]

Street art also exemplifies the kind of cultural reproduction that de Certeau discovered in actions that transgress not only the spaces where messaging can appear,

but in its obvious noncommercial, ephemeral and gratuitous form. It takes on the politics of the gift, in direct opposition to most legal messaging on city walls and vertical spaces. His description of popular culture tactics is parallel to the logic of street art:

> [O]rder is tricked by an art ..., that is, an economy of the 'gift' (generosities for which one expects a return), an esthetics of 'tricks' (artists' operations) and an ethics of tenacity (countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning, or a fatality) ... [T]he politics of the 'gift' also becomes a diversionary tactic. In the same way, the loss that was voluntary in a gift economy is transformed into a transgression in a profit economy: it appears as an excess (a waste), a challenge (a rejection of profit), or a crime (an attack on property). (de Certeau 1984: 26, 27)

For the generation of artists in the 1990s, the walls became found materials to work *with*, turning attention to what is normally, intentionally, unnoticed, visually suppressed. The public gift of the street work, even if declined or disavowed, would always be a mark of presence. As Barry McGee stated in 1995, graffiti was all about showing 'signs of life. People are alive. Someone was here at that time.'[30] Visibility is presence; to exist is to be seen.

A clear statement of public intervention in city space is summed up in Swoon's description of her Indivisible Cities project that she organized with artists in Berlin in 2003. '[T]here is a struggle going on for the physical surfaces of our cities.'

> Indivisible Cities is a visual and cultural exchange focusing on artistic interventions in the urban landscape. Creating itself out of the margins of our cities is a community of people, more precisely it is a community of actions, a floating world of ephemera and physical markings made by people who have decided to become active citizens in creating their visual landscape. Every time someone reappropriates a billboard for his or her own needs, scrawls their alias across a highway overpass, or uses city walls as a sounding board for their thoughts and images for messages that need realization, they are participating in this community. They are circumscribing a link to every other person who believes that the vitality of our public spaces is directly related to the *public* participating in the incessant creation and re-creation of those spaces. [Street art is] a form of active citizenship that resists attempts at containment ... I think that the persistence of graffiti and street art in cities all over the world is evidence of a common need for citizens to take a role in their environments.[31]

Street art provides ongoing signs of environmental reclamation, marking out zones for an alternative visibility. Both regimes of visibility are disturbed, a disturbance that also renders their falsely transparent operations visible as the social and political constructions they are.

CONCLUSIONS AND CONSEQUENCES: STREET ART IN THE DIALOGICAL FIELD OF ART

In providing an overview of the larger contexts of street art for visual culture, I'm painfully aware of the omissions and generalizations one must commit to fulfill the task. I can only provide some conclusions and consequences in a brief form here. Like all cultural terms, 'street art' names and constructs a category useful in various kinds of arguments, but is easily deconstructible as riddled with internal contradictions and contestable assumptions. And like Pop after the 1960s, some critics are already declaring an 'end' to street art as a viable movement: street art, as the argument goes, has now received art institutional recognition along with trivializing by media exposure and dilution by imitators and co-option by celebrity culture. For most artists today, street art is simply a short-hand term for multiple ways of doing art in dialogue with a city in a continuity of practice that spans street, studio, gallery, museum and the Internet. This continuum of practice was unknown to artists in any prior cultural position. The term does useful cultural work when street art is viewed as a practice that subsumes many forms of visual culture and postmodern art movements, but played out in conflicting ways across the visibility regimes and constitutive spaces of the city and art institutions.

Summing up, let's retrace the network array of forces within which street art has become a connecting node:

1. Street art reveals a new kind of attention to the phenomenology of the city, the experience of material spaces and places in daily life, and has reintroduced play and the gift in public exchange. Well-executed and well-placed street art reanchors us in the here and now, countering the forces of disappearance in the city as a frictionless commerce machine neutralizing time and presence and claiming all zones of visuality for itself. Street art rematerializes the visual, an aesthetics of reappearance in an era of continual re-mediation and disappearance (see Bolter and Grusin 2000).
2. Street art thwarts attempts to maintain unified, normalized visibility regimes, the legal and policy regime for controlling public, 'nonart' space and the institutional regime controlling the visibility of art. It exposes the contest for visibility being played out in multiple dimensions, and the internal contractions which must be repressed for the regimes to function. Street art will remain an institutional antinomy because it depends on the extramural tensions of working outside art spaces that are commonly understood as 'deactivating' art. Art space, the heterotopia of museum, gallery and academic institutional space, is well recognized in its constitutive function as part of learned and shared cultural capital.[32] Public space, on the other hand, is understood as precisely that space in which art does not and cannot appear, where we've learned that art cannot be made visible as such. The spaces have been, and continue to be, reconfigured, but the visibility regimes remain deeply embedded in our social, economic and political order.

3. By subverting the cultural wall system and championing the ephemeral act of art, street art reveals internal contradictions and crises in the parallel universe of the art world. In the institutional art world, we only find unity in a consensual disunity about the state of contemporary art, the institutional response to popular visual culture, and the ongoing dissatisfaction with dehistoricizing, dislocating, institutional containers. There seems to be no escape from the intramural self-reflexive authentication operations, no 'outside the wall'. Hal Foster aptly describes the effect of monumental institutional spaces like Dia:Beacon and the Tate Modern: 'we wander through museum spaces as if after the end of time' (Foster et al. 2004: 679). The art world isn't dancing on the museum's ruins (as in Crimp 1993), but keeps the 'museum without walls' installed within the institution.
4. Street art since the late 1990s is the first truly post-Internet art movement, equally at home in real and digital spaces as an ongoing continuum, inter-implicated, inter-referenced, the real and the virtual mutually presupposed. This phenomenon is partly generational and partly a function of ubiquitous and accessible technology in cities. Inexpensive digital cameras and laptops join the Web's architecture for do-it-yourself publishing and social networking in a highly compatible way. Street art as a global movement has grown unconstrained through Web image-sharing and multiple ways of capturing and archiving ephemeral art.
5. Street art since the 1990s is a kind of manifesto-in-practice for the complex forms of globalization, cultural hybridity and remix which are increasingly the norm for life in global, networked cities. Street art's embrace of multiple mediums, techniques, materials and styles makes it an exemplar of hybridity, remix and post-appropriation practices now seen to be a defining principle of 'contemporary' culture. I'd like to expand on this issue to explore some wider implications of street art and cultural hybridity.

STREET ART AND CONTEMPORARY HYBRIDITY, REMIX AND APPROPRIATION: THE IMPLICATIONS OF READ-WRITE VISUAL CULTURE

To riff on a police term, street artists have 'known associations' with hip-hop and post-punk cultures, a trans-urban 'mash-up is the message' aesthetic that values a living, performative, reinterpretation and recontextualization of received materials in real-time practice. If collage is arguably the major aesthetic force in twentieth-century art forms,[33] then hybridity, appropriation and remix have clearly become the forces for the early-twenty-first.[34] The key issue, which I will develop further in a forthcoming book, is understanding hybridity, remix and appropriation as surface forms of a deeper generative grammar of culture, as visible or explicit instances of a structurally necessary dialogic principle underlying all forms of human expression and meaning-making.[35] The appropriative or dialogic principle in creative production is part of the source code

of living cultures. As part of the internalized, generative grammar of culture, the dialogic principle is ordinarily invisible to members of a culture because it is not a unit of content to be expressed, but makes possible the expression of any new content per se.

In street art, appropriation and remix of styles and imagery extend the prior practices of Pop and Conceptual Art genres,[36] but street artists take the conditions of post-modernity for granted, as something *already* in the past, already accounted for and in the mix. The state of art-making today is no longer burdened with the curriculum of postmodernism—mourning over the museum's ruins and the dehistoricized mash-ups of popular culture,[37] cataloguing the collapse of high and low culture boundaries, and finding uses for anxieties about postcolonial global hybridization and identity politics. Remix is now coming into view as one of the main engines of culture, though long shut up and hidden in a black box of ideologies. Behind so much creative work in art, music, literature and design today is the sense of culture as being always-already hybrid, a mix of 'impure', promiscuous, and often unacknowledged or suppressed sources, local and global, and kept alive in an ongoing dialogic call and response.

Nicolas Bourriaud has argued that the cluster of concepts related to remix and appropriation can be described as *postproduction*: recent art practices function as an alternative editing table for remixing the montage we call reality into the cultural fictions we call art (see Bourriaud 2005, 2009b: 177–88). The editing table or mixing board (terms from audio-visual postproduction) are apt metaphors for a time when so much new cultural production is expressed as postproduction, received cultural materials selected, quoted, collaged, remixed, edited and positioned in new conceptual or material contexts. By making visible the reuse of materials already in circulation in the common culture, much street art has affinities with constantly evolving global hybrid music cultures, which have subsumed earlier DJ, Dub, sampling and electronic/digital remix composition practices.[38]

Street art is visual dub, extracting sources and styles from a cultural encyclopedia of images and message styles, editing out some transmitted features and reappropriating others, inserting the new mix into the visual multitrack platform of the city.[39] The urban platform is assumed to be read-write, renewable, and never a zero-sum game: you only 'take' when in the process of creating something that gives back.

The cultural logic of remix and appropriation has collided with the intellectual property regime in the high-profile copyright case of Associated Press v. Shepard Fairey, which hangs on the interpretation of Fair Use in the transformation of a digital news photograph in Fairey's iconic Obama poster portrait in 2008. The lawsuit has been settled out of court with neither side conceding its point of law, which means that the macro legal issues remain unsettled and with no change in legal philosophy going forward.[40] The case is not simply a matter for theory and practice in the arts and the publishing industries, but for the legal regimes now at a crisis point in adjusting to contemporary cultural practices and digital mediation.[41] Artists, writers, musicians, fashion designers, advertising creatives and architects all know that the active principle

named by 'appropriation' is part of the generative grammar of the creative process. Appropriation is not imitation, copying or theft. It's conversation, interpretation, dialogue, a sign of participating in a *tradition* (lit., 'what is handed down'), regardless of whether the tradition is a dominant form or an outsider subculture, or whether the artist takes an adversarial, affirmative or conflicted position within the tradition.

Of course, neither street art nor Fairey's post-Pop practices are special cases for art or legal theory. But since the AP case is based on the practice of a street artist known for appropriation and remix, it represents a 'perfect storm' of issues that can be redirected to expose collective misrecognitions about artworks that lost sustainability decades ago. The misrecognitions are maintained through our enormous social investment in the ideologies of single authorship, originality, property and ownership. Misrecognitions about production are further maintained by the positivist, atomistic logic of legal philosophy on copyright and IP in which surface similarities between works are taken as the bases for causal arguments about copy or derivation. Specifically for visual culture, Fairey's Obama images rely on a logic of remediation, recontextualization and stylized iconicity that extends back to Rauschenberg and other Pop artists. Through the strategy of the 'demake' or down-skilled 'remake', a strategy observable in a wide array of twentieth-century works prior to recent street art, generic portrait features present in a digital photograph have been rendered as a hand-made screenprint image.[42] Of course, the uses of the remake in Fairey's and other artists' practices are only one instance of multiple kinds of expressions produced every day in the dialogic grammar of culture. The AP v. Fairey case can generate a larger public awareness of these urgent issues and make it possible to ask precisely those questions that cannot be asked when collective misrecognitions are at stake. Artists producing works in all media and the public receiving them now live in a culture with a legal-economic regime requiring a resyncing with reality that will be as unsettling as the Copernican revolution.

With its ability to embrace multiple urban subcultures and visual styles in a globally distributed practice, street art provides a new dialogic configuration, a post-postmodern hybridity that will continue to generate many new kinds of works and genres. Now working in a continuum of practice spanning street, studio, gallery, installation spaces, digital production and the Internet, street artists expose how an artwork is a momentary node of relationships, a position in a network of affiliations, configured into a contingent and interdependent order. The node may have collective authorship, may have affiliations with media, images or concepts from other points in the network, near or far, contemporary or archival, may take form in an ephemeral, material location and live on through global digital distribution. The important thing for the artists is to keep moving and keep proving themselves for their mentor and interlocutor, the city. The artists are mapping out in real time one possible and promising future for a post-postmodern visual culture.

FIGURE 10.1 Gaia and palimpsest with other street artists (1), Soho, New York City, 8/2008. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.2 Swoon (left), Gaia (right) and other artists, woodblock and linocut prints on paper and acrylic on wall, W. 21st St., New York City, 7/2008. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.3 Swoon, W. 21st St., New York City, 7/2008. Detail. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.4 Multiple artists, Soho, New York City, 8/2008. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.5 Shepard Fairey and multiple artists, Candy Factory Building, Soho, New York City, 8/2008. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.6 Gaia and palimpsest with other street artists (2), Soho, New York City, 8/2008. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.7 Herakut and multiple artists, W. 22nd St., Chelsea, New York City, 6/2009. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.8 WK Interact, Houston St. and 1st Ave., New York City, 8/2005. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.9 Judith Supine, printed collage on wall, Chelsea, New York City, 7/2007. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.10 7th Ave., New York City, vertical advertising space, with Empire State Building in background. 10/2010. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.11 Plaça de Santa Maria del Mar, Barcelona, vertical advertising space, 6/2010. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.12 Shepard Fairey, wall mural, alley behind Irvine Contemporary, Washington, DC, 10/2008. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.13 Shepard Fairey and EVOL, wall murals, alley behind Irvine Contemporary, Washington, DC, 6/2009. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.14 Shepard Fairey and crew installing 'Obama Progress' mural at 14th and U Streets, Washington, DC, 10/2008. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.15 Shepard Fairey, 'Obama Progress', completed mural, 10/2008. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.16 Os Gemeos, mural, acrylic on wall, Houston and Bowery, New York City, 8/2009. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.17 Os Gemeos, mural, Houston and Bowery, New York City, 8/2009. Detail. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.18 Banksy, American Indian, Mission District, San Francisco, 10/2010. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.19 Banksy, wall mural, Columbus Ave., San Francisco, 10/2010. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.20 Berlin, wall behind Kunsthaus Tacheles, between Friedrichstrasse and Oranienburger Strasse, 6/2007. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.21 Berlin, urban intervention and placement, off Alte Schönhauser Strasse, with the Fernsehturm ('television tower') in background, 6/2007. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.22 Invader, Ron English, Shepard Fairey and others. Paris, Rue du Four, 7/2009. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.23 Shepard Fairey, Peace Goddess collage, collage and acrylic on canvas, Grand Canal, Venice. Venice Biennale, 6/2009. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.24 Shepard Fairey, Peace Goddess collage, Grand Canal, Venice, 6/2009. Close up. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.25 Shepard Fairey, collage on canvas, St. Mark's Square, Venice. Venice Biennale, 6/2009. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.26 Shepard Fairey, collage on canvas, St. Mark's Square, Venice, 6/2009. Close up. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.27 Barcelona, multiple artists, wall behind the Mercado St. José, 6/2010. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

FIGURE 10.28 Barcelona, Btoy and other artists, stencil on paper and paint on door, Barri Gòtic, 6/2010. Photograph by Martin Irvine, © Martin Irvine, 2010.

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NOTES

1. Arguments for this transition are appearing at an accelerated pace; see especially Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010; Klanten, Hellige and Ehmann 2008; Chandès 2009; McCormick, Marc Schiller and Sara Schiller 2010.
2. It would be impossible to recognize all the friends, colleagues and artists that have been part of an ongoing dialogue that informs many of the ideas in this chapter, but I would especially like to thank Shepard Fairey, Swoon, Roger Gastman, Pedro Alonzo and Jeffrey Deitch for their dedication and commitment to boundary-crossing art forms.
3. Notable books include Gastman, Neelon and Smyrski 2007; Klanten et al. 2008; Lazarides 2009; Lewisohn 2008; Mathieson and Tápies 2009; Rose and Strike 2005; Shove 2009a,b; Banksy 2007; Fairey 2008, 2009; Ganz 2004; Ganz and MacDonald 2006; Rojo and Harrington 2010; Swoon 2010; Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010; McCormick et al. 2010.
4. A highly perceptive description of the current scene of contemporary art is Terry Smith 2009 and 2006; see especially chap. 13, pp. 241–71; see the recent dialogue in *October*: Foster 2009; also telling is the Roundtable discussion on 'The Predicament of Contemporary Art' in Foster et al. 2004: 671–9.
5. This is a central question approached in various ways in Marquard Smith 2008; see also the now-famous volume of *October* devoted to the issue: Alpers et al. 1996; Foster 1996; and the 2005 issue of the *Journal of Visual Culture*, Jay 2005.
6. See especially Gastman et al. 2007; Gastman and Neelon 2010; Ganz 2004; Mathieson and Tápies 2009; Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010.
7. The seminal argument about 'disorder' (also taken to be symbolized in graffiti) and crime was stated in Kelling and Wilson 1982; further developed in Kelling and Coles 1996; the application of this theory on graffiti policy in New York City has been well examined by Joe Austin in Austin 2001.
8. The transitions and hybridizations across the variety of street art and graffiti art practices are well documented in Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010 and McCormick, Marc Schiller and Sara Schiller 2010.
9. The historical context for these theories is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see especially Klanten and Huebner 2010: 4–5; Burger 1984; Krauss 1986: 151–70; questions of relational art in global cities is also usefully explored in Nicolas Bourriaud's essays; see Bourriaud 2002, 2009b; on the Situationist theory of *detournement*, see the key texts by Debord in Knabb 2006 and the overview by Sadler in Sadler 1998.
10. See the World Urbanization Prospects, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/index.htm.
11. For the conceptual models here, I am especially indebted to the research by Manuel Castells and Saskia Sassen on the global city; see especially Castells 1989, 2000 and Sassen 2001, 2002, 2006, 1998.
12. See the works of William J. Mitchell: Mitchell 1996, 2000, 2005; and the Web site for his 'Smart Cities' project at MIT: http://cities.media.mit.edu/.
13. For example, from May 2008 to October 2010, the street art animation MUTO by BLU was viewed 8.2 million times on YouTube: BLU 2008. A simple search on 'street art' and 'graffiti' in YouTube yields more than 5,000 videos with millions of aggregate total views. A search on the tag 'street art' in Flickr in November 2010 yielded more than one million photos, appearing in many collective and group collections (see www.fllicker.com).
14. This is affirmed in the recent exhibition of performance art at the Whitney Museum; in the curator's view, performance played out 'the end game of Modernism in their various

rupturings of the autonomous space of painting and its primary location—the vertical plane of the gallery wall' (Whitney Museum of American Art 2010).

15. The first quotation is from an essay by Robert Pincus-Witten in 1968, the second from a review in 1953 by Lawrence Campell, in Del Roscio and Twombly 2003: 65, 25; see also Bird 2007.
16. Twombly's 'allusions' to writing were famously described by Roland Barthes in 'The Wisdom of Art' (1979); in Barthes 1984; reprinted in Del Roscio and Twombly 2003: 102–13.
17. The Pomidou Center in Paris organized a Retrospective of Villeglé's work, *Jacques Villeglé, La comédie urbaine*, September 2008–January 2009. Other important exhibitions include *L'informe, mode d'emploi*, Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris, 1996 and *Le Nouveau réalisme*, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 2007. The artist has his own official Web site: http://www.villegle.fr.
18. A good overview of Tàpies's career is on the Web site for the Dia:Beacon exhibition in 2009: *Antoni Tàpies: The Resources of Rhetoric*, http://www.diaart.org/exhibitions/introduction/9.
19. Tàpies 2007: 117; also reprinted in Bozal and Guilbaut 2005.
20. During a visit to Barcelona in June 2010, I was struck by the historical layers of street mural art visible in central zones around the city, including the walls on streets opposite the Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona, which has an extensive collection of Tàpies's works. The street art was still securely *extramuros* in relation to the museum, and the artists' awareness of this binary relationship is clearly marked in their placement strategies.
21. See especially Holzer and Creative Time 2005; Holzer's Web site, 'Projections', http://www.jennyholzer.com/ (Holzer n.d.); Waldman and Holzer 1997; and Elizabeth A. T. Smith and Holzer 2008.
22. Kruger's recent exhibition at Sprüth Magers gallery in Berlin was entitled *Paste Up* (November 21, 2009–January 23, 2010), indicating affinities with billboards and street art. See http://spruethmagers.net/exhibitions/248.
23. Kruger designed a city-block-long installation on the façade of the Ontario Museum of Art in 2010; see http://www.ago.net/barbara-kruger, and the installation video: http://artmatters.ca/wp/2010/05/barbara-kruger-installation-video/. She also recently created a location site-specific work in lower Manhattan as part of the Whitney Museum's 'On Site' series; see http://whitney.org/WhitneyOnSite/Kruger.
24. Interview in Redmon 2010.
25. First published in French in 1980 as *L'invention du quotidian*; English translation, 1984 (de Certeau 1984).
26. See Lessig 2008, 2005. The creative foundations of read-write and remix are explored in Miller (DJ Spooky) 2004 and 2008, and Miller and Iyer 2009.
27. I'm extrapolating here from the standard model of the interpellation of the subject in Althusser's 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1970) (in Althusser 2001) and the tradition of message-addressee analysis and reception theory.
28. See Ron English's Web site: http://www.popaganda.com/index.shtml, and Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010: 100–7.
29. From Swoon 2004. Some projects of Swoon and Toyshop from 2003–2004 are archived at the collective's Web site: http://toyshopcollective.org/.
30. *Juxtapoz* (Spring 1995): 69.
31. Statement: Swoon 2003; additional description of the project: http://toyshopcollective.org/.
32. These concepts have been extensively developed by Pierre Bourdieu: see Bourdieu 1992, 1990, 1979.

33. One version of the often-cited comment by Donald Barthelme, 'the principle of collage is the central principle of all art in the 20th century', was from 'A Symposium on Fiction' (1975), included in his collected essays, Barthelme 1999: 58.

34. See, inter alia, Letham 2007; Hebdige 1987; Miller (DJ Spooky) 2008; Lessig 2008; Bourriaud 2005.

35. The literature on this topic from multiple disciplines is huge, but my view draws from semiotics, linguistics, Bakhtin, reception theory and theories of appropriation; see Holquist 1990; Bakhtin 1992; Petrilli and Ponzio 2005; Evans 2009.

36. For a useful compendium of sources and arguments, see Evans 2009.

37. As expressed in the now-canonical statements by Douglas Crimp (1993) and Fredric Jameson (1991).

38. Bourriaud expands on the question of hybridity and postproduction as part of global, nomadic culture in Bourriaud 2009a,b.

39. The dub concept, derived from Jamaican reggae studio production, is excellently explored by Veal 2007; see also Paul D. Miller, Miller (DJ Spooky) 2004, 2008 and Miller (DJ Spooky) and Iyer 2009.

40. By way of disclosure, I negotiated the acquisition of Fairey's hand-stenciled Obama HOPE portrait for the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, and I was a consultant for the legal firm representing Fairey in the AP lawsuit. It is difficult to find a noncontentious summary of events in the AP v. Fairey case, but see *The New York Times* archive of coverage (http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/shepard_fairey/index.html). A special issue of the *Journal of Visual Culture*, 8/2 (August 2009) was devoted to the topic of Obama in visual culture and political iconography.

41. This is one of the most urgent issues of our time, which I will treat more fully in a forthcoming book. For background, see Lessig 2008; Patry 2009; Vaidhyanathan 2001; Boyle 1996.

42. This point is persuasively argued by Cartwright and Mandiberg (2009); see also Sturken 2009.

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