The Cultural Landscape of Street Art in Italy
Paola E. Boccalatte

Rome, Garbatella. Sten & Lex, *Paesaggio, 2013*.
Photo Paola Boccalatte

Street art encompasses within itself, different phenomena in dialogue with city spaces. Within this rapport there are often opposing forces; urban space and museum, anonymity and authorship, preservation (as in the case of the 'Banksy' in Naples or of the mural by Keith Haring in Pisa, recently restored) and the ephemeral nature of the works, the unlawfulness and a need for legitimacy.

With street art a city portrays itself. As places of communication and expression of dissent regarding political and economic power, the walls are experienced, neither as public, nor as private spaces but rather as community spaces.

In a recent exhibition at the Museum of the History of Bologna, murals by the Italian artist Blu, which had been taken from the walls of city buildings being demolished were exhibited.

Bologna, Palazzo Pepoli, *Street Art - Banksy & Co.*, 2016

The artist subsequently removed his murals from the city as a sign of protest against the commercialization of space and culture; a radical gesture that claims a "right to the city".

Graffiti is frequently an expression of social unrest or visions of the city which are other than the predominant. Sometimes seen as signs of deterioration to be censored or 'cleaned', in many cities

Modena. Blu and Ericailcane. Photo Paola Boccalatte

Rome, via del Porto Fluviale. Blu. Photo Paola Boccalatte

they are being transformed into tourist attractions thanks to festivals, competitions, apps and urban landscape tours of discovery. In some cases they become instruments of shared cityscape construction, as in a "difficult" neighbourhood in Turin, where the city had commissioned murals which later became the subject of an exhibition by the online city museum, MuseoTorino.

L'Aquila and Irpinia, both damaged by earthquakes, bring colour to one's cheeks with their 'open air museums'. On the other hand, the Museum of Urban Art (MAU), in Turin, has existed since 1995.

Turin, Barriera di Milano. Millo, *Habitat*.
Photo Paola Boccalatte

Turin, MAU. Opiemme, *Achab's Whale*, 2014. Photo Paola Boccalatte

In Messina (Sicily), at the ex-fishmarket, one mural by Nemo's - objected to by some as obscene - tells of the current tragedies in the Mediterranean, with images of corpses pulled from the water that indifference leaves hung out to dry.

In the mural "Heritage", recently made in Milan by Alice Pasquini & Biancoshock, the UNESCO logo has been revisited, "A new inheritance to get in touch with; a moment of exchange; added value that frightens one", say the artists.

Rome, LungoTevere. William Kentridge, *Triumphs and Laments*. Photo Paola Boccalatte

A five hundred-meter frieze was created by pressure washing layers of smog deposits from the wall. It is estimated to last about six years. Many figures refer to conflicts and represent episodes of triumph and defeat of Rome, from the mythological past to the present, in a sort of procession.

Sheets of paper pasted onto walls in various Italian locations commemorate Pier Paolo Pasolini, a left-wing intellectual who was assassinated in 1975. As in a secular Pietà, the writer carries his own corpse in his arms.

Matera. Ernest Pignon-Ernest, *40 ans après son assassinat*. Photo Paola Boccalatte

Turin, Lungopo. Bruno Martinazzi, *Frater Tuus*. Photo Paola Boccalatte

A work by the sculptor and partisan Martinazzi has been vandalized several times. A portrait of Victor Jara the Chilean singer-songwriter and supporter of Salvador Allende murdered in 1973, has been superimposed. Martinazzi, recognizing in this image a message of peace, in harmony with his own work, has asked that the stencil not be removed.

In 2007, a fire blazed in the Thyssen Krupp factory in Turin. Seven workers lost their lives. The incident shook the conscience of the city, which have dedicated a mural in memory of this grave event.

Turin, corso Valdocco. Photo Paola Boccalatte

A mural by Blu in Grottaglie (Taranto) depicts the ILVA steel plant smokestacks as "Pinocchio" noses of politicians and industrialists who, in the name of money, are lying, poisoning the environment and the people.

Places tell their own stories, such as the April 1944 raid of the Quadraro district in Rome, a "hornet's nest" according to the Gestapo commander, in the mural of Lucamaleonte (2014), and remind us of their martyrs

such as the young Peppino Impastato, killed in 1978 for opposing the Mafia. He said, "If you teach people about beauty you provide a weapon against resignation, fear and the code of silence".

Se si insegnasse la bellezza alla gente,
la si fornirebbe di un'arma contro la rassegnazione
la paura e l'omertà.

Peppino Impastato.

Genoa, vico della Rosa. Photo Paola Boccalatte