

RECONNECTION:

'Image Not Found.' Martyn Reed. Stavanger, Norway, 2022. Photograph ©Brian Tallman.



Forging Renewed Connections through Unsanctioned Urban Art

Editorial

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Following last year's LOCKDOWN issue, this edition of *Nuart Journal* explores the theme of RECONNECTION and the ways in which researchers, artists, curators, and communities are forging renewed connections with cities, projects, and each other as the uncertainty and disconnection of the past two years recedes.

Nuart Journal's acid yellow RECONNECT issue contains 12 original articles, visual essays, and interviews. In his discussion of his latest book, *Last Picture*, Professor Jeff Ferrell, the godfather of graffiti scholarship, asks whether we should rethink what we see as 'street art' by considering what forms of 'hidden' art on the streets might exist. He notes that 'art in the museum or the household is confined to those who have access to it. But street art is there for everyone to see.' Ferrell shows us a series of photos that were entirely salvaged from alleys and streets. Similarly, Adrian Burnham exposes the accidental and often anxious aesthetics of discarded everyday objects, as captured in the evocative photography of Franck Allais, while artist Alexandros Simopoulos presents a process-based visual essay, 'Sache Que Je T'Aime: A Tag Turned Mural', that shows the artist's translation of an impassioned yet almost invisible urban scrawl to a work of monumental proportions.

In her article, 'This New Chalk Era', Megan Hicks discusses a ubiquitous but highly ephemeral form of art on the streets and its key role in the history and politics of the Australian urban landscape. Moving forward to contemporary times, Lachlan MacDowall explains the curatorial ideas behind 'Flash Forward', a large programme of laneway-based art and music in Melbourne, Australia. The social and architectural history of the city and its infamous grid of streets provided a rich context for jumping forward into imagined futures for the city.

Curator Elisa Bailey looks at the poetics of process in the work of Oleg Kuznetsov (aka OK). She shows how this artist's work is always informed by his origins in graffiti and street art, including the importance of ephemerality, artistic freedom, ownership (or lack thereof), art as invisible labour, and the intimacy between artist and creation as being central to its value. Enrico Bonadio and Olivia Jean-Baptiste expand on issues of artistic ownership by asking whether copyright can be used to stop politicians from exploiting street art. They analyse a recent case involving

French leftist leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon's use of images from Paris-based artist COMBO Culture Kidnapper. As the artist reflects, '[this] is a fight which concerns all actors in the world of street art'.

One consequence of the social distance enforced by the Covid-19 pandemic was an exponential rise in the appropriation of mediated modes of creating and experiencing work on the streets. Cairo-based artist Agnes Michalczyk describes the development of her series of augmented murals in the Egyptian capital – a clear example of the ways in which artists have adapted to engage contemporary audiences by designing and incorporating interactive virtual elements into their street-based material work.

Artists Jan Vormann and Brad Downey discuss their recent project, 'Between Particles and Waves'. Developed during a period of radical disconnection, *Between Particles and Waves* harnessed the virtual yet almost material space of Minecraft to reconnect a group of international artists known best for their artistic practice in public spaces in cities throughout the world.

Artist Ian Strange and musician Trevor Powers give us some unique insights into the collaborative process behind the development of 'Dalison', an architectural intervention and sound and light installation that culminated in a single-channel film work, a series of photographic works, and a one-off live performance. *Dalison* has been described as an 'audio-relic dug up and still covered in dirt' and a 'requiem for a place now lost'.

London-based artist and activist Aida Wilde and museum consultant Dan Vo explore the resonance of lost places and displaced people in Aida's latest work, 'Dreamboat II'. Using repurposed Syrian banknotes, Wilde created a tiny origami boat waving a flag printed from pulverised Syrian currency. As Vo asserts, this piece is small and delicate, but it calls on us to remember the resilience of refugees rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of war, persecution, and natural disaster.

We end the RECONNECT issue of *Nuart Journal* with a roundtable discussion (chaired by Athens-based Myrto Tsilimpounidi and Anna Carastathis) that connects and amplifies queer feminist approaches to graffiti and street art scholarship and practice. As we revive our collective networks, critical and progressive discussions such as this give us all renewed traction and hope.