

I was 16 years old when I first trespassed on to some railway tracks and wrote the initials of the graffiti crew (of which I was the only member) on a wall. Afterwards the most incredible thing happened – absolutely nothing. No dogs chased me, no thunderbolt from God shot down to punish me, and my mum didn't even notice I'd been gone. That was the night I realised you could get away with it.

That was also the night I discovered that beyond the 'No Entry' sign everything happens in higher definition...

– Banksy<sup>1</sup>

The last three issues of *Nuart Journal* – LOCKDOWN, FREEDOM, and RECONNECT – were singularly focussed on finding ways to collectively adapt and creatively respond to the uncertainty and disconnection wrought by Covid-19. In consciously moving beyond the emergency response mode of this pandemic triptych, we are delighted to now turn our energy to a completely unrelated theme for this edition of *Nuart Journal*.

For this seventh issue of *Nuart Journal*, we invited contributors to reflect on the subversive power of TRESPASS. Given shifting social norms and the growing acceptance of art on the streets as a legitimate form of cultural expression, in what sense – if any – is unsanctioned art still an act of trespass with the potential to make an impact on people's lives?

*Nuart Journal's* burgundy TRESPASS issue contains 12 original articles, visual essays, and interviews. In our opening visual essay, 'Cut in the Fence', Adam Void and Chelsea Ragan bring to life the theme of TRESPASS in a striking visual narrative consisting of just some of the 'small acts of reclamation' submitted to them by observers from around the world.

Cultural critic Carlo McCormick first took on the TRESPASS theme more than a decade ago in his influential book *Trespass: A History of Uncommissioned Urban Art*. For this issue of *Nuart Journal*, McCormick critically revisits the theme of TRESPASS in the light of the many significant changes to the field since its publication – including the rise of neo-muralism, the global spread of street art festivals, and the advent of social media.

In her contribution to this issue, artist and law professor Lucy Finchett-Maddock explores the theme of TRESPASS through her voyage through the street art and graffiti made at sites of free parties and illegal

raves. As she explains, these are environments that exist somewhere between the rustic and the civic, the rural and the urban – what we might call the 'peri-urban' – 'where the city meets its bounds, the suburbs languish into the hedgerows, and the wilderness begins.' Through her photographs of the street art and graffiti pieces painted during outdoor raves and parties, Finchett-Maddock brings the sonic surfaces of these former rave sites back to vivid life, as urban-rural time-capsules.

In his original article, 'The Pretty Vacant: Exploring Absence in Subcultural Graffiti', sociologist Erik Hannerz explores our 'persistent affection for the vacant and unfilled' through a discussion of presence and absence as interrelated forces in our cityscape that shape the production and erasure of the art that thrives and fades on the walls of our cities. Hannerz builds critically on Schacter's (2014: 42) notion of vacant spaces as evoking 'a *cenophobia* [or] a fear of the empty that only decoration will alleviate' to propose the converse operation of a positive affective compulsion, '*cenophilia* [or] a love for the absent and empty'.

In his article for this issue, Thomas Chambers gives us a rare glimpse into the 'trainspotter' – a figure that holds a unique place in the British psyche. In 'From Trespasser to Nerd: The Changing Image of Trainspotting in Post-War Britain', Chambers notes that the activity of trainspotting in Britain has long been associated with lawlessness, trespass, and deviance. He also explores some unexpected links between trainspotting and graffiti, in revealing the graffiti practices trainspotters have historically engaged in.

In 'Unite, Liberate, and Create: A Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Space at Glastonbury Festival' Damian Le Bas and Sam Haggarty draw critical attention to the

pernicious cultural and legal deployment of the ‘threat’ of TRESPASS in relation to Gypsy and nomadic cultures in the United Kingdom. They note that the perceived threat these cultures are constructed as posing is complex and cyclical, and that they are regularly marginalised and maligned via accusations of trespassing in both time and space: ‘On the one hand, there is the accusation of physical trespass – *you should not physically be in this place* – and on the other, of cultural trespass – *everyone else has moved on from living like that: your culture does not belong in this modern society, it shouldn’t be here now.*’

Our interview with Daniel “Dusty” Albanese also centres on asserting our right to public space – and our very existence, both on the streets and in the virtual world. Albanese draws attention to the radical censorship and silencing of queer graffiti writers and street artists on social media, and the often violent defacement of queer art on the streets. In ‘Queer Liberation and Street Art: Taking Public Space and Declaring Our Right to Exist’ we explore Albanese’s long history of queer visual activism and his forthcoming feature documentary on LGBT+ street art and graffiti, *Out in the Streets*.

In their original article, ‘Protest Art on Contested Statues Igniting Conversations About Art, Law, and Justice’, Marie Hadley, Sarah Hook, Nikolas Orr, Adam Manning, and Rewa Wright consider the wide-scale removal of statues of historical figures linked to violence, colonialism, and slavery, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement. This article explores both ‘illegal’ anti-racist graffiti on contested statues and ‘legal’ artwork critical of the law’s role in perpetuating colonial injustice. The authors conclude that, ‘both unlawful and lawful protest art are powerful conversation-starters that support critical reflection on contested public art as a legal object and site of in/justice.’

In ‘Keeping the Streets Wild with Stencibility’, Kadri Lind and Sirla document their recent exhibition, ‘Hello Mister Police Officer’ (Berlin, 2022; Nuart Aberdeen, 2023), which is part of the European Capital of Culture, Tartu programme. This visual essay depicts the collective experience of artists working ‘in the wild’ on the streets of Tartu, Estonia, including photographs paradoxically taken by police officers who interfered with the production of these uncommissioned artworks.

Artist Aida Wilde’s visual essay, ‘Power Rarely Falls Within the Right Hands’ references her experience of displacement, loss, and trauma – having fled Iran during its war with Iraq with her mother and sisters as a child – whilst connecting this experience with that of countless others. The background to her street-based triptych is densely woven with the names of just some of the thousands of women and girls who have been murdered in the struggle against Iran’s oppressive regime, honouring and humanising those who have been lost to this ongoing state-sanctioned femicide.

Heidi Härkönen, Rosa Maria Ballardini, Heidi Pietarinen, and Melanie Sarantou’s original article, ‘Nature’s Own Intellectual Creation: Copyright in Creative Expressions of Bioart’ extends our notion of TRESPASS and transgression beyond the work of human actors. In a novel consideration of the rights of non-human agents in the co-production of art, the authors ask whether, and to what extent, a work of bioart can be considered its ‘author’s own intellectual creation’, when its form is either dependent on, or is a result of, co-designing the work with a non-human author (that is, with nature).

We conclude the TRESPASS issue of *Nuart Journal* with a piece that reflects on transgressive new scholarship. In ‘Graffiti and Street Art Research: An Outsider Perspective’, Mari Myllylä and Jonna Tolonen discuss their experiences as researchers in the field of graffiti and street art research (GSAR). In their discussion, they focus on what it is like to be active in this field as ‘outsiders’ – they are both part of a new generation of GSAR researchers who are not writers or artists themselves, and as such they reflect on the gatekeeping practices of more established ‘insider’ scholars, and other challenges they have encountered in building their credibility as researchers in this rapidly expanding field. Critical discussions such as this one, whilst challenging, are crucial in remaining aware of the ongoing process of ‘para-disciplinisation’ in the quest for academic legitimacy for researchers in graffiti and street art studies (Ross et al, 2017).



Trespas. Stavanger, Norway, 2023. Photograph ©Martyn Reed.

1 McCormick (2010: 6).

#### References

- McCormick, C., Schiller, M., Schiller, S. & Seno, E. (2010) *Trespas: A History of Uncommissioned Urban Art*. Cologne: Taschen.
- Ross, J. I., Bengtson, P., Lennon, J. F., Phillips, S. & Wilson, J. Z. (2017). 'In search of academic legitimacy: The current state of scholarship on graffiti and street art'. *Social Science Journal*, 54(4): 411-419.
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