

ART AND BELONGING:

ON PLACE, DISPLACEMENT AND PLACELESSNESS

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Street art is often talked about as contributing to a sense of place. Mural projects, festivals, and street artworks are said to foster feelings of belonging, recognition, and connection to a place. More than this, street art is increasingly used in place-branding and in commercial transactions. This article poses some questions about the implications of the way that street art relates to place and both makes and unmakes spaces of connection and disconnection. It will begin with the use of street artwork to sell property development, identifying this as a contemporary characteristic of the now well-known relationship between art and gentrification. As a counterpoint to the commercialisation of the sense of place generated by street art, it examines the work of artists such as Ian Strange, Francis Alÿs, and Stanislava Pinchuk, who make art located in displacement, dislocation, and dispossession.

INTRODUCTION

Where does street art take place? Found in train tunnels, abandoned buildings, warehouses, train carriages in railyards, alleyways, and on rooftops, street art has never been found only in the street. The qualifying adjective in the art form's name provides an indication of simply one possible location for this cultural form rather than determining the type of site that it must take place within. Beyond its lack of confinement to the physical space of the urban street, the place of street art is always expanding, multiplying, proliferating.

This article focuses primarily on street art rather than graffiti.¹ The common characteristic found in both art forms (the application of paint to surfaces, generally without permission) allows us to raise questions about, firstly, the impact of the illicit application of paint to surfaces; secondly, the ways in which that cultural practice has been taken up in the context of commercial property development; and, finally, the potential for art to locate itself in places of displacement and dispossession.

As a cultural form, street art has always been interested both in the nature of place and in expanding the network of available locations in which to make art. Such an interest in proliferation has meant that street art, like graffiti before it, has travelled. Graffiti initially travelled from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and city to city by means of metropolitan and national train systems (Austin, 2001; Ferrell, 1998; Gastman and Neelon, 2010); after it began to be photographed and documented, images of graffiti could be acquired in zines and books. Street art, becoming popular and prevalent during the time of the rise of internet platforms, was very quickly available to consumer and viewers through their computer screens and then smart phones (MacDowall and De Souza, 2018)

Very quickly, street art was in many places at once. As it travelled, street art seemed to bring qualities of creativity, 'edginess', cool – and money. Often identified as a key marker of the 'creative city' or 'cultural precinct', the presence of street art was used by city authorities for place branding to potential tourists and to encourage the clustering of 'creative industries' such as fashion, advertising, and architecture in areas where street art could be found, in initiatives that drew from the ideas of Richard Florida's 'creative class' (2005). In search of urban creativity, street art was mobilised not only across topographies and geographies, but also across markets, with variable price points thanks to the diversity of forms that street art could be shaped into: Banksy stencils printed on a tea towel, prints, T-shirts, action figures, as well as artworks sold through auction houses and galleries and art collections (Young 2014; 2016).

When street art stayed in place – on walls, in streets – this stasis did not mean its images were exempted from monetisation. Instead, painted walls in so-called 'edgy' neighbourhoods became markers of value. To live or work in an area where the walls had been painted by artists meant a price that could be applied to rents and house prices, and one that would mobilise upwards over time.² As Schacter writes, 'Of all the ways economic utility is generated within the Creative City, however, it is place making or place *marketing* that is highest up on the list' (emphasis in original) (2014: 163).

The shift from 'place marking' to 'place marketing' did not go unnoticed by those with a direct financial stake in the trade in housing and property. Once developers had perceived a relationship between property values and the presence of illicit street art randomly placed on walls over

time, it did not take long for this apparent correlation to be converted into a belief that commissioned art interventions would have the same effect on markets. Mural projects, usually involving large-scale gable end murals painted with the consent of residents or city authorities, can now be found in innumerable cities and towns.

Much debate has ensued as to whether legal murals offer positive or negative consequences for neighbourhoods, for street art culture, and for social attitudes to the presence of paint on urban surfaces (Kramer, 2010; McAuliffe, 2013; Schacter, 2014) and it is likely that mural projects and mural festivals give rise to multiple, sometimes contradictory, and context-dependent effects that should make commentators hesitant to generalise: a street art festival such as Nuart in Stavanger, Norway, will have a different history and effect than the actions of a local council in Dulwich in London. However, one consequence of the proliferation of the presence of legal murals has been a very specific variant of the monetisation of the presence of paint on surfaces: the work of street artists and graffiti writers can be incorporated into property developments themselves.

Gentrification is notorious for its 'repurposing' (or cannibalisation) of places, usually turning old factories into apartments, or creating havens of consumerism inside now-defunct industrial spaces. In Fitzroy, in Melbourne, property developers turned their attention to the 100-year-old Star Lyric Theatre. It had been a theatre and then a neighbourhood cinema for decades; later, it was occupied by a discount homewares shop before sitting unused and unoccupied for several years. Once slated for development, 158 apartments are now to be built on the site. Prior to construction commencing, in 2017 the street artist Rone was commissioned by the developers to hold an exhibition, called *Empty*, within the derelict building.³

The exhibition was no doubt partly intended by the developers as a means of managing neighbourhood resentment, but the experience of the exhibition itself transcended mere public relations (**Figure 1. Rone, *Empty*. Photograph ©Alison Young**).

Rone's show combined site-specific work – painting directly onto the peeling walls, around an existing mural from the building's days as a theatre – with photographs of works he had painted in abandoned buildings whose locations were undisclosed. Those works, in buildings clearly heading for collapse, acted as reminders to the show's visitors that the Lyric building was also demolition-bound. The sparse installation also foregrounded the architecture of the theatre, putting it on display as a kind of anticipatory memorial to the imminent loss of the building itself. Although the show ran for only ten days, more than 12,000 people attended. At its conclusion, the building was padlocked, and shortly afterwards, hoardings went up that announced its destruction. Within a few months, the building was bulldozed, and gone, present only as the moniker of an as-yet unbuilt apartment building.

This example is in part a familiar tale of loss: something that was once a community theatre is today simply another development opportunity. But the exhibition managed to be more than that: for ten days, the building once more was a focal point in its community, and a space in which art was displayed, looked at, experienced, and communicated as something that can be remembered. It thus *seemed* that art might reanimate the dying building. This proved, however, to be illusory: the exhibition was shut down on schedule, the site was padlocked, and, shortly afterwards, the building was bulldozed to the ground.

An even more stark demonstration of street art's

contemporary subservience to the interests of property can be found in a 'display' property, part of another development in Fitzroy, near the Lyric Theatre. The exterior of the building has been painted in colourful abstract shapes and signed by Sofles, a Brisbane-based graffiti writer associated with authentic, hardcore wall writing, albeit one who has shown himself to be interested in commercial collaboration (**Figure 2. Façade by Sofles. Photograph ©Alison Young**).

That this development is another step along the path towards the annihilation of street art as anything other than decoration is confirmed by the sign on an adjacent property development, simply called 'Fitzroy Ltd', as if acknowledging that the very idea of Fitzroy as a neighbourhood has been reduced to a corporate signifier or a commodified 'mood' or 'feel' that an apartment purchaser can acquire.

As Schacter commented, 'Street art has today come to shed any radicality it may have once contained not simply through selling *itself*, but, perhaps more perniciously, through it selling a false notion of *place*' (emphasis in original) (2014: 162). Rone's subsequent activities have starkly proved this point. His projects have used the same key features that seemed so effective in *Empty*: liaison with a developer to gain access to a site slated for development, installation of site-specific works within the soon-to-be-demolished building, inclusion of photographs of works painted in unnamed locations, and a highly limited exhibition schedule.⁴ With each project's repetition of these features, the creativity of the projects seems to diminish, resulting in a practice that seems less about art and more about the 'artwashing' of property development (Evans, 2015; Young, 2016).

In the relationship of contemporary manifestations of 'street' art to space and place, a paradox is at work here. Although it was once used to activate places, to make them into dynamic spaces of contestation, challenge, encounter, and atmosphere, when street art is deployed in soon-to-be-developed derelict buildings, it marks the *death* of space. Instead of creating dynamic or activated spaces, these commissioned interventions annihilate creative potential, reducing locations to mere approximations of what the place could be. It is not that street art festivals, projects, murals, interventions and actions can no longer activate places, but rather that neighbourhoods like Fitzroy (and Shoreditch and Williamsburg and Kreuzberg) are plainly showing us what is at stake, and how things can go wrong. We can no longer simply assume that street art (or even graffiti, thanks to the use of Sofles's work in the example above) can exist with the same kinds of impact or challenge that it once did. Asking 'What hope is there for Street Art?' (2014: 170), Rafael Schacter pointed to a number of artists engaging in 'urban experimentation' or 'urban intervention'; these artists are 'working to produce a new type of visuality for the city, who have and *do* come to question their environments, who have and do question the intellectual and physical milieu in which they stand' (emphasis in original) (2014: 171).

While 'urban interventionists' make use of the city's environments to construct counter-narratives and question the value and meaning of its milieu, it is also worth examining the insights of a number of artists whose work seems simultaneously to focus upon place, drawing on locations to situate and structure their works, while negating the conceptualisations that underpin the meanings of 'home', 'city', 'property', and even 'place' itself. Thinking through the relationships of their resulting artworks to place and space can assist us no longer to simply mourn street art's lost radical impact, tempting though this is and satisfying though it may feel. Instead we might start to think about

street art's present and future radical potential: asking questions about the relationships of art (street art, graffiti, and contemporary art alike) to space and to place. How can art respond to the now widespread phenomenon of displacement and disconnection from place? How can street art engage with placelessness? What can placelessness and displacement teach us that we might use to resist the co-optation of street art from place-making to place selling?

To pose some possible answers, or to begin a conversation around these questions, I consider here work by three artists. Two have been known in the past as street artists or graffiti writers; one has always been considered a fine artist. All three combine multiple practices in their work. All work in and away from their 'home' location; all of them seek to problematise ideas of place, home, and the inhabitation of space.

THE PLACE OF HOME

As a graffiti writer, Ian Strange wrote as Kid Zoom. He left his home city of Perth, Australia, and went first to Sydney and then to New York City, where he acquired a reputation as an emerging star in the street art scene (Young, 2016). However, Strange instead chose to develop an art practice that centred on large-scale sculpture combined with painting and documentary video. He created a to-scale model of the house he grew up in, and exhibited it with a wall removed, showing the hollowed-out interior rooms, a skull painted on its front façade, and with three burned out family cars outside. Although described by Strange as a 'homecoming', it was clear conventional ideas of the family home, for Strange, had been called into question, and shown to be on the verge of destruction or deterioration.

In his next series of works, *Suburban*, Strange rendered the position of the family home even more precarious. *Suburban* exhibited a range of pieces, using various media: a number of large photographs, a short documentary film, some large painted pieces of wood, and a video installation. The works focus on seven houses in various American states, all already unoccupied before Strange began working on them, but stripped of habitation and re-presented by him as *ideas* of suburban houses. Such a process involved a restoration of the houses' façades: Strange added various kinds of domestic accoutrements to the houses depending upon their state of disrepair and according to his desired image for them. At the same time as he strove to make these uninhabited houses conform to an image of typical habitation, Strange reworked the outer façades to mark the houses out as abnormal: one was painted entirely red; on another a gigantic skull adorned a wall; another was painted with a slashing red cross; another painted entirely black except for a perfect central circle. Some of them were then burned down (by local fire-fighters) and filmed by Strange as they blazed (**Figures 3 and 4. Ian Strange, Suburban. Photographs ©Ian Strange**).

Strange has stated: 'the documentation process gives the work its final form' (Strange, 2017). His art is thus not so much an act of creation (although it is profoundly creative); rather, it records aspects of what already exists. His work performs an act of witnessing of the destruction that is already intrinsic to these places. This thematic became even more pronounced in his subsequent works, which continued to investigate the conjunction between suburbia and destruction.

In *Landed*, he created another model of his family home, this time a near-full size replica, which he painted black and installed as if it was sinking into the ground. The

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4





Figure 5

Figure 6



Figure 7

idea, said Strange, was that the house had fallen out of the sky, as in *The Wizard of Oz* – a neatly humorous reference to Australia (Young, 2016). For Strange, the work allowed him to ask larger questions about belonging, evoking the relationship between the early British colonisers and the place in which they had landed. The half-sunken house showed something of the cataclysmic impact that Northern European cultures had had upon the land and its peoples. It delivers, said Strange, ‘a physical sense of whether this house belongs here. And from that you can ask, “Do we belong here?... Does the city belong here?”’ (Young, 2016).

For a subsequent series, *Final Act*, Strange worked in an active disaster zone, in Christchurch, New Zealand. Two big earthquakes occurred there, in September 2010 and February 2011. In the second earthquake 185 people died. Over the course of both, much of the city’s central business district was destroyed. In addition, many of the city’s suburbs were rendered uninhabitable. These suburbs are in the ‘red zone’, with homes on land so badly damaged they will wait years for rebuilding (more than 8000 houses in Christchurch lie within the zone) (Johnston, 2013). Four red zone houses were made available to Strange by the New Zealand government’s Canterbury Earthquake Re-recovery Authority. Strange cut into the houses, and, as he puts it, ‘after each cut was made, the interiors were painted entirely white... [The resulting images] highlighted the negative space of the cuts in the houses, with light beam-ing out.’ (Strange, no date)

His intention was ‘to open up the homes, expose their vulnerability and loss of function’ (Figure 5. Ian Strange, *Final Act*. Photograph ©Ian Strange). This strategy was partly inspired by the works of Gordon Matta-Clark and Richard Wilson, and partly cognizant of the ways in which homes in the entire earthquake affected region were ‘split open, sunk on an angle or left with gaping holes’. The artworks were archived and acquired by the museum’s permanent collection as a record of these homes and all the other homes which have been demolished’ (Strange, no date).

More recently, *Island*, made during 2015-2017, focuses on ‘interventions directly undertaken on foreclosed homes through Ohio’s “rust-belt” region as well as research and work created in Detroit and New York between 2015 and 2017’ (Strange, 2017):

Island aims to create a poetic connection between the specificity of each GFC affected home and the larger themes they have come to represent. Looking at the icon of the house as a deeply vulnerable object and personal vessel for memory, identity and aspiration’. Using ‘the metaphor of the desert island’, the home is presented as ‘a place of simultaneous refuge and entrapment. Beyond the context of economic foreclosures, the works touch on a wider idea of suburban isolation and angst. (Strange, 2017)

The works show, once again, ‘the house as psychological symbol and the false sense of permanence it seems to represent’ (Strange, no date), and ‘direct markings on or cuts made into the homes, in an attempt to place the psychological interior of the houses onto their exteriors’ (Figure 6. Ian Strange, *Island*. Photograph ©Ian Strange).

For Strange, the houses ‘are dwellings of projected memories from the viewer; of their childhood, of family, belonging and isolation’ (Strange, 2017). In all his works,

the idea of a particular space – the home – is given physical location in a type of building that many of us would immediately find recognisable, only to realise that Strange has alienated us from our memory of what a home might look like, offering instead a series of images of the isolation and precariousness of the suburban family home.

STRANGERS IN A FAMILIAR PLACE

In the intervention, *Fitzroy Square*, part of his *Railings* series, the Belgium-born, Mexico-based artist Francis Alÿs walked around and around a square in London.⁵ As he walked, he dragged a stick along the metal fence poles that he walked past, eliciting a repetitive noise. He did this for a number of hours and was filmed while walking; the film is edited into a 5-minute video that can be viewed online (see further Edensor 2010 on this and other artworks about walking). As with much of Alÿs’s work, *Fitzroy Square* is far more complex than is initially apparent. The video records the randomness of the event, including people who have walked through the scene, just as Alÿs is doing – the camera stays for a while with an elderly, hunched woman who progresses slowly through the square. The sound made by the stick appears random, but it seems likely that Alÿs selected a stick that would make a melodious, musical sound – he ‘plays’ the fence, beating a rhythm as he walks. He could have used a metal rod to achieve a clanging, discordant sound, or a larger stick, to produce a crashing and oppressive sound. Instead we are given a bell-like, modest sound, that can be heard faintly as Alÿs walks away from the camera and with more clarity when he is filmed closer to the camera. The work is of course full of choices made by Alÿs, although we are encouraged to receive the work as if it is a found event, a recording of something that any person could have made rather than an event staged by the artist to produce particular sounds in a particular place.

What is this place anyway? The place chosen by Alÿs is not random, in that he is circling one of London’s private gardens, located within its urban squares. These private gardens are locked, accessible only to those who live on the square itself and who are therefore in possession of a key. Paying attention to the work’s location renders Alÿs’s actions less random and less melodiously musical – the stick rapping on the fencepoles draws our attention to the stranger at the gate of the garden, the literal outsider, unable to enter the private garden, but repeatedly circling, circling, circling. How would the square’s residents have viewed Alÿs, as he walked round and round their private place? Were the individuals who traversed through the square rendered uneasy by his presence? In the minimalist, almost-nothing that is *Fitzroy Square*, Alÿs shows us that the unquestioned acceptance of the private spaces within public space is worth our attention, is worth circling around and around, asking: who controls this fence? Who is given passage into the garden, and who is locked outside it?

DISPLACED IN PLACE

Stanislava Pinchuk is a Ukrainian-born Australian artist who, under the name Miso, was a well-regarded figure within Melbourne’s street art scene in the 2000s, creating elaborate, stylised hand-drawn paste-ups, often depicting women, that were installed in laneways in Melbourne over a period of years (Figure 7. Street artwork by Miso. Photograph ©Alison Young). But this artist has in recent years been making very different artworks under

her own name. The works represent obliteration and destructions of various kinds; they map sites of erasure and annihilation. As such they counter the tendency towards forgetting effected by the passage of time and the disappearance of traces of violence into the landscape.

To that extent, although the transformation from 'Miso', street artist, to 'Stanislava Pinchuk', fine artist, might seem familiar, the shift in name is not matched by a shift in aesthetic topic. As Miso, the artist made ephemeral artworks that paid tribute to otherwise anonymous figures from her memories, relocating them from the Ukraine to the streets of Melbourne. As Pinchuk, she makes art depicting what ephemerality produces – diminishment and disappearance. Her artworks examine spaces after the displacement of their inhabitants, or spaces that individuals rendered placeless are displaced into, especially after disaster and diaspora.

When Pinchuk turned her attention away from making art for the streets, the streets initially came with her into her artworks. She began tracing maps on paper, conceptual maps that responded to the idea of walking through city streets, in Melbourne and in Tokyo, where she was living. Then in 2014, Russia began bombing the Ukraine, and Pinchuk found herself monitoring the news to try to learn where bombs were being dropped. She channelled this experience of distant but intense grief and distress into a series of artworks called *Surface to Air*. The name of the series held a double meaning, referencing a technology of war, the surface-to-air missile, but also naming the drive to recover from submergence in trauma, to regain access to air after being buried in the deep earth of grief. The artworks mapped explosion sites; Pinchuk created almost-invisible images by using tiny hammers to make rippling

shatter marks on paper, framed under sheets of glass. By forcing the spectator to look hard at the surface, to look obliquely and make the shatter marks catch the light, Pinchuk makes us replicate her efforts in making these maps of destruction. These central devices – data-mapping, depictions that are almost imperceptible, easy to overlook, and a distancing from literal rendition of destruction – have become the drivers of Pinchuk's practice, and have provided structure to her subsequent series of works.

Fallout arose out of the 'triple disaster' of March 2011, when the Fukushima reactor in northern Japan went into meltdown after an earthquake and a tsunami. Pinchuk had been living in Tokyo at the time. Years afterwards, she travelled to Fukushima to record the landscape in the disaster's aftermath. Here she photographed locations, identifying small signatures or apparently insignificant places that would hold a key to the artworks she would later make. In Fukushima, two things became significant for her. First, the nuclear clean-up involved digging up the radioactive earth, bagging it, and removing it for burial: she saw trucks filled with bags of radioactive earth, some of it spilling out, revealing the potential futility of the exercise. At the same time, she repeatedly encountered fishermen's nets spread across the ground; some had been stranded there in the disaster, others were in use by those who had crept back into the Grey Zone of the clean-up and who had returned to their pre-disaster livelihood despite the potential risks (**Figure 8. Stanislava Pinchuk, process photograph for *Fallout*. Photograph ©Stanislava Pinchuk**).

Pinchuk mapped sites of soil removal, radioactivity readings and landscape, generating a data map of a blighted landscape. Instead of hammering, she transferred the data onto paper using a needle to create tiny pinpricks that, once

Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

again, were almost invisible until caught by the light. The result was a map of twisted topography, enigmatic folds and creases that destabilise our sense of what we are looking at. The twisted mesh of the artwork also evokes the fishing nets stretched across the poisoned soil (**Figure 9. Stanislava Pinchuk, Fallout. Photograph ©Stanislava Pinchuk**).

After visiting Fukushima in 2015 and 2016, Pinchuk decided to go back to her place of birth, the Ukraine, in order to understand the impact on the region of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. In 2017, the result was *Sarcophagus*, a more than 6 metre long scroll of pin-pricked paper. The work's name references the so-called sarcophagus, or Object Shelter, built in haste to contain the Chernobyl reactor after the disaster. And the work's delicacy and fragility draws attention to the fact that the sarcophagus at Chernobyl has been due for many years to be rebuilt, but delays have stymied the project. Pinchuk's work followed the same process as used for *Fallout*: site visits, photodocumentation, walking, field notes, and data mapping. The resulting work is displayed in a glass case, requiring the spectator to lean over, lean in close, shift the gaze from side to side to try to see what is depicted – almost impossible to take in its totality, and meaningless when viewed as single marks or in sections.

Having thus made two series of artworks that responded to places from which people had been displaced, in 2017 and 2018, Pinchuk began making art about a location at which displaced people had found themselves – the refugee camp known as 'the Jungle' in Calais, which was first established in 1994, when the Eurotunnel opened, and endured till October 2016. Displaced people had created an

enormous encampment, with some of them living at this location for many months. In October 2016, the French authorities evicted 6,400 people and bulldozed the encampment, further displacing the already displaced. Pinchuk went there to see the place that so many had hoped would be but a stopping-off point during their journey to places of safety, but which became a place of detention or suspension. There she both documented the process of clearing the site and collected the numerous remnants of people's lives in the camp, such as SIM cards, shaving cream containers, and tubes of toothpaste. These were transported back to her studio in Australia (**Figure 10. Stanislava Pinchuk, context photo for Borders (The Magnetic Fields). Photograph ©Stanislava Pinchuk**).

Once again, she sought to create artworks that allude to the violence of displacement but which refuse its direct representation, and in which the process of their making somehow enacts violence on the materials themselves. In *Surface To Air* Pinchuk hammered paper till it bloomed into shatters; in *Fallout* and *Sarcophagus* she pierced paper with needles, all processes that took months to enact. For this new series, to be called *Borders (The Magnetic Fields)*, Pinchuk learned a new skill: the making of *terrazzo*. She combined the materials that she had collected from the Jungle, and ground them into fragments; the resulting material was then sculpted into small, regular, precise shapes, box-like, tile-like. The fragments glint within the objects, displaced from their owners, ripped from the place they were last possessed, held, or used (**Figure 11. Stanislava Pinchuk, Borders (The Magnetic Fields). Photograph ©Stanislava Pinchuk**).



Figure 12

HOW TO BE RADICALLY CONNECTED TO SPACE BY BEING OUT OF PLACE

Just as Ian Strange's works in *Landed*, *Suburban*, *Shadow*, and *Island* render unfamiliar and ominous the very idea of the home, or haven, so Pinchuk's *Borders* series is intensely destabilising. It represents the end point of a process in which the artist both replicates the process of displacement – these fragments have been transported so far away from their owners and their last place of use – and simultaneously calls it into question in the strangeness of the transformation of everyday objects into *terrazzo*. The tiny boxes and tiles, in which plastic shards mimic jewelled inlays, are in themselves displaced, out of place, and when looked at invite the spectator to experience something of the destabilising force of displacement (Figure 12. Stanislava Pinchuk, *Borders (The Magnetic Fields)*, partial view. Photograph ©Stanislava Pinchuk).

Looking at them is therefore an uncanny experience, and uncanniness is an affect dimension achieved by the artworks of all three artists discussed here. To be uncanny, as we know from Freud, is to be *unheimlich*, unhomely, to have no place in which to belong, no home. In this essay, I have sought to pose questions about the ways in which street art has been made to be too much 'at home' in the contemporary city: it is now so easy on the eyes of the spectator that it has been reduced to a mode of urban embellishment or beautification. In its early years, street art emerged as an art form with an uncanny affect – an encounter with an uncommissioned artwork generated a moment of surprise, or shock or enchantment for the urban spectator (Young, 2014). This uncanny affectiveness, which derived from the street artwork's radical connection to space, has been diminished, just as street art's sense of political connectedness to public is increasingly diminished and at times seems to have been lost.

Faced with street art as a decorative addition to property developments in cities around the world, where can we find traces of the radical connection to place and space that was so important in animating street art as an international movement as well as conversations about the role of art in everyday life the contemporary city? Although fine artworks are far from immunised against the imprecations and encroachments of the market, my suggestion in this essay is that the artists considered here offer ways of looking both obliquely and critically at the degradations inflicted by city-branding and property development upon the practices of street art.

It is therefore worth following the paths traced by artists like Ian Strange and Stanislava Pinchuk out of the street art scene, as a means of considering the role of art both in the dislocation from a sense of place, through the displacing effects of the gentrification process, and also in being able to represent loss of the conversation with and in space through the trauma and rupture of displacement and placelessness. In Ian Strange's work, the home itself becomes a vacant site of trauma and loss; in Alys's work the mundane acts of urban life such as walking, freighted with uncertainty of meaning, show how we require fences and borders for meaning and order; and in Pinchuk's work, we see how the places that we take for granted are always about to be overwhelmed by a wave or to collapse into an earthquake or to be destroyed by war or radiation – the things we hold on to are always on the point of being lost. Despite what developers seek to communicate to us about art in urban space as a guarantor of the value of property, these artworks of displacement tell us that in every place we are on the verge of placelessness; in each of our possessions lies the moment of our future dispossession.

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- 1 It is important to acknowledge that street art and graffiti are related but distinctive practices with intersecting and sometimes antagonistic histories.
- 2 The name given to the conversion of ephemeral, freely accessible artworks placed in the street into markers of value is 'the Banksy effect', coined in 2007 by the Wooster Collective in New York City, online at <http://www.woostercollective.com/post/the-banksy-effect>; see also Young (2014)
- 3 Details of the exhibition can be viewed online at <https://www.r-o-n-e.com/empty-project>. Empty condensed and intensified ideas that had appeared in some Rone's previous work, including the painting of images directly onto large walls in temporary spaces, and the painting of a mural of a woman's face on the entire façade of a building awaiting demolition and redevelopment, both in the centre of Melbourne.
- 4 On the installation, 'Omega Project', see Pepper (2017); on Rone's 2019 intervention 'Empire', see Best (2019); Walker (2019).
- 5 The artwork can be viewed on Allys's website at <http://francisalys.com/fitzroy-square/>.

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