

Brand New – You're Retro!

Memory and the City

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'Las guerras establecían los límites de los sueños' (The war established the limits of the dreams), Heliographies of Memory series.
Said Dokins in collaboration with Leonardo Luna. Sverd i fjell, Stavanger, Norway, 2018. Photograph ©Said Dokins & Leonardo Luna.

The city... contains [its memories] like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets... every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.
— Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Said Dokins and Leonardo Luna's Heliographies of Memory series provides a meditative illustration of Memory and the City, the theme of this issue of *Nuart Journal*. Their evanescent work captures moments lost in time – resignifying the memories that are omnipresent, yet otherwise invisible, in our cities. As Dokins explains, 'the texts are written with light, so the words disappear as soon as they are suggested by the moves of the calligrapher. Invisible to the eye, they can only be captured by a process of long-exposure photography, that reveal what happened, even though no one could see it. Through these ephemeral interventions with light calligraphy, we capture the invisible – acting on air, we rework once iconic places: historic sites, public plazas, monuments, bulwarks, and places long abandoned.'

In the last issue of *Nuart Journal*, Jeff Ferrell's visual essay employed discarded photographs to reanimate 'a secret archive of city life [...] a dislocated urban history of visible ghosts and invisible intentions, a disorienting *dérive* through other lives, other times, and other places [...] another city within the city [...] pieced together from image, loss, memory, and imagination.' This issue builds upon these notions to focus on the evocative intersection of memory and the city, and the role of urban art cultures and the art of the streets in unravelling and critically reworking the city's collective memories. This issue contains traditional academic papers, visual articles, interviews, and talks which critically address this theme.

In our lead academic article for this issue, Stephen Pritchard tackles perhaps one of the most difficult questions necessary for a truly critical street art practice. 'More Today Than Yesterday (But Less Than There'll Be Tomorrow)' is a reflexive analysis of the relationship between street art, gentrification, and nostalgia narratives. As Pritchard notes, the 'street art movement has evolved from its roots in class and race conflict and anti-gentrification activism to become [...] a perfect tool in gentrifiers' artwashing arsenals'. Pritchard's critique may make some readers uncomfortable, but it is crucial that we continue to raise 'difficult questions'.

Indeed, we hope that this third peer-reviewed issue of *Nuart Journal* marks another step towards a more critical street art. The journal is a forum for critical discourse and commentary on urban art cultures and street art practice. One of the things that is exciting about this field is that it is radically interdisciplinary. Street art scholars are not just art historians, they are cultural geographers, anthropologists, criminologists, psychologists, legal scholars, and archaeologists. Many street art researchers have some existing connection to the subculture – as former or current artists or graffiti writers, so they have a level of insider subcultural knowledge, sensitivity, and creative insight that other researchers so often lack.

While this interdisciplinarity is a strength, it also poses a logistical challenge in terms of keeping abreast of research occurring internationally across so many different fields. This is one major reason that we launched *Nuart Journal* – to bring together the work of street art scholars from different disciplines in one volume. For us, it is important that street art research remains open access, and available to all. Academic articles are often locked behind paywalls, making research inaccessible to the general public. This is antithetical to the democratic ethic of street art. We have an open call policy and we also accept articles from artists, curators, photographers, and others working outside of academia. We want to make academic studies of street art as democratically accessible and intrinsically engaging as street art itself. Scholarship should not have to be formidable and inaccessible to count as such.

We aim to publish traditional academic articles as well as to make space for more experimental and visual essays, and we particularly welcome submissions that break the mould and challenge conventional modes of scholarly and artistic communication.

The journal is divided into three main sections:

- I. Original articles
- II. Experimental and visual essays
- III. Interviews, book reviews, and talks

In Section I, our academic articles deal with some key practical, political, and conceptual issues currently facing critical street art practice. This includes Pritchard's critical consideration of street art's relationship with gentrification. In 'Before and After: The Liveable City' Andreas Petrossiants builds on Pritchard's focus on gentrification, to consider how forms of once 'counter-cultural' resistance operate after they have been co-opted, and 'folded into the lexicon and toolkits of the ruling class'. Tyson Mitman's article analyses a memorial practice specific to graffiti writing subcultures – that of continuing to write a deceased graffiti writer's name in public space, after their death. As Mitman points out, this complex and compassionate act of remembrance works both as a memorial and as an extension of the deceased writer's reputation and street fame – making it appear as if they were still alive and leaving their mark on the city walls. In the final article in this section, Hendrikje Grunow explores the ways in which street artists in Bogotá, Colombia, collectively construct and contest collective memories of the city, with street art approached as a form of 'testimonio, palimpsest, *lieux de mémoire*, and practice'.

In Section II, our visual essays offer an alternative to the more traditional papers of section I. Articles in this section push the boundaries of conventional modes of scholarly and artistic thought. These include Jad El Khoury's 'Burj El Hawa (Tower of Wind)', a provocative intervention that reclaimed a former sniper's tower in Beirut, Lebanon; an unknown author's 'Erasing the Memory of the Revolution on the Streets of Cairo', which details an artist's empathic interventions on the streets of the Egyptian capital, over time; Paul Harfleet's 'Tourist in the Daylight', a powerful and sensitive photo essay documenting his 15-year international 'Pansy Project'; and Oliver East's 'Ill Architecture', which explores the artist's interventions on the streets of Manchester, UK – where rubbish is recycled into temporary artworks, 'making the neglected spaces where dumping occurs impossible to ignore'. East describes this as a direct response to 'the artwashing practices of placemaking'. Riitta Oittinen's 'Traces from the Past: Ghost Buildings in Brussels' is an evocative photo essay that examines the ghostly remains of buildings which no longer exist, but operate as architectural fossils through their negative presence. Megan Hicks' 'Wall story: An Eleven-year Visual Record of a Street Art Site in Sydney' documents the changes to a wall in Newtown over an 11-year period which saw Banksy's 'Little Diver' disappear under the accumulation of art on the wall. In the concluding article in this section, Jonathan Levin provides a fascinating photo essay that explores the deterioration and stratification of graffiti on subway trains in Rome – over a period stretching back to 1992.

Section III contains interviews and talks with leading artists, curators, and academics. Evan Pricco, Editor-in-Chief of *Juxtapoz Magazine*, discusses the 25th anniversary of *Juxtapoz*, and the ways in which it has moved from being a small alternative art magazine in 1994, to a multi-platform entity in 2019. Robert Kaltenhäuser and Thomas Lauterberg, from the newly launched *Boulevard Magazine*, explain their focus on reprinting lost treasures – critical articles lost in time, or out of print, and texts otherwise not available in English. The final article in this section reports on a vigorous panel debate held at City University, London, on Andrea Baldini's new book, *A Philosophy Guide to Street Art and the Law*. Andrea Baldini, Enrico Bonadio, Sabina Andron, and Susan Hansen provide interdisciplinary responses to some of Baldini's sometimes controversial claims about street art and graffiti.

To conclude, we'll leave you with another quote, this time from *Blade Runner* (1982) a film set in Ridley Scott's imagined Los Angeles of 2019 – anything but an 'invisible city', yet one that still exists in a collective memory that perpetually haunts our 'Post-Fordist' futures:

*I've seen things you people wouldn't believe.
Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion.
I watched c-beams glitter in the dark
near the Tannhäuser Gate.
All those moments will be lost in time,
like tears in rain.*

If you'd like to contribute to a future issue,
please see the back cover for the call for papers.