

(Un)placing Street Art: Augmented Reality and Urban Museums

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ABSTRACT

Street art was born with a strong connection to place. Due to its site-specificity, it is difficult to exhibit it inside a museum. There is an intrinsic risk of completely de-contextualising and un-bounding street art. Therefore, in Italy, there is an increasing adoption of online, mobile-based solution such as mapping or using augmented reality to narrate the artworks within their own placeness. However, the online mapping of Street Art and the adoption of AR is far from uncomplicated. Starting from interviews conducted with stakeholders of the Museum of Augmented Urban Art in Milan, this paper considers the various narratives involved in the creation of the museum. It focusses on the selection of the artworks, on how the ephemerality of the street art has been addressed and how the relationship between street art and AR have unfolded. It also reflects how the museum acts as contact zone and digital and physical memoryscape within the context of the city.

KEYWORDS

Digiplace, Street Art, Museum, Augmented Reality, Mapping

Introduction

Street art¹ is a phenomenon which we increasingly see daily in our urban dwellings (Schacter 2017). It has a strong connection with the place it is situated within, and with the narrative of that place. This relationship can be detailed in various ways. For example, the positioning of an artwork can tell a lot about the target audience: street art experts and members of the street art community (Ferrell and Weide 2010) or broader relationships with neighbourhoods or institutions. Even the conservation of street art is dependent on the place and its ownership, as in the case of legal/illegal artworks.

Cities are also progressively allocating spaces to street art, for example, the 'free walls' in Milan or Rome, which are designated places for street art sanctioned by the authority of local institutions within the urban landscape². Artists can draw inspiration from the place the street

¹ For a definition of street art see (McDowall, 2019). If previous definitions of street art have considered the illegality and anonymity of the artworks as central as much as their ephemerality, McDowall has considered a broader, more popular approach which stems from social media and contemporary popular culture. This definition includes commissioned street art and artworks of identifiable artists, which better reflects how street art is defined in the online sphere and in Italy.

² In the case of free walls, street art is legal and the street artist does not require any previous authorisation. The issue of finding legal walls is so important that there is a dedicated website for legal walls around the world: <https://www.legal-walls.net/>.

art is immersed within and from the networks of relationships it is embedded within. Sometimes the inspiration is drawn not only from the place but from the contingent encounter with other street artists, as shown, for example, by the interviews I have conducted with street artists active in Italy. Some street artists mentioned how, for them, the street art creation was a moment to spend with friends. In other cases, the street art is connected and born out of commissions and relationships, drawing from the place and the relationships with communities and local associations, within the frame of urban regeneration projects. In these cases, there is a theme that can be changed and adapted according to the place and the actual appearance of the wall (e.g. stains or different colours.)

Social media are progressively changing the street art landscape where there is an increasing tendency to street art 'placelessness' (MacDowall 2019). It is enough to post the street art online to be known, so then the physical artwork can disappear. Nevertheless, it is still challenging to exhibit street art inside a museum. Its exhibition in a traditional setting poses two main problems: how to address the street art processual and site-specific nature, and the disconnection between street art and local communities, which are increasingly involved in street art projects. Moving a street artwork away from its original location, usually peripheric, towards a museum which is usually in the city centre, betrays a set of power relationships. Only whoever feels at home 'inside museums' (and can pay) has access to an art which is usually freely available.

There is a constant tension between what museum professionals (e.g., curators and conservators) think of street art and what artists think of street art. The artists mentioned before have a clear idea of street art as a meeting and a processual experience where the final result has an ephemeral nature: the street art object is less important than the set of relationships that is born from and is immersed within, the ritual of the object creation (Schacter 2014).

However, museum professionals have different ideas of what street art is and how it should be conserved. In the last 15 years, there has been a rising interest in street art by museums and institutions in Italy. Exhibitions such as *Street Art, Sweet Art* in Milan at the Padiglione Arte Contemporanea in 2007 and the birth of *in situ* museums such as the Museum of Urban Art (MAU) in Turin in 2000 or the MuRo in 2010 in Rome have contributed to make street art familiar in the Italian context, identify it as part of an avantgarde genealogy, which spans from Futurism to the International Situationist, and consider it worthy of conservation. However, in the theoretical contributions of art historians, the recognition of street art as critique of the urban space and its ownership, born out of the tagging practice and 'spot appropriation' (Snyder 2017; Ferrel and Weide 2010) is always mixed and confronted with the necessity of labelling (Riva 2007; Ganz 2009; Schacter 2017) and exhibiting it.

For example, the polemics connected with *Street Art and Co: L'arte dello stato urbano* (Bologna 2016) have shown how difficult it is to exhibit street art³. In this instance, artworks were torn from the wall and exhibited in the city centre without the consent of street artists.

³ See also the court case of Banksy against the MUDEC for the unauthorised exhibition in 2018 (Art@Law 2019).

Moreover, it was a paid exhibition. Subsequently, Blu, one of the most known street artists in Italy, decided to cancel all his artworks in the city. Looking into his explanation of the choice of cancelling street art, it is clear how it is a critique of both the urban structure and the power relationships connected and showed by it (Young 2014; Schacter 2014).

It doesn't matter whether those walls were part of condemned buildings or part of the landscape in the northern outskirts of town. It doesn't even matter that seeing street art exhibited in a museum is paradoxical and grotesque. This 'street art' exhibition is representative of a model of urban space that we must fight, a model based on private accumulation which commodifies life and creativity for the profits of the usual few people. (Ming 2016)

This exhibition well represented the tension between what street artists consider as street art and what curators and heritage professionals think as street art: on the one end, the focus is on the process of street art, its presence within the place, the decontextualization and re-contextualisation of the place through street art (Riva 2007; Schacter 2014) and its public-facing value, on the other, the focus is on conservation and keeping street art as museum object in a controlled environment, in a 'cultural freezer' (Parry 2007).

The (Digital) Alternatives: Mapping and/or Augmented Reality.

To respect the site-specificity of street art, digital solutions have been adopted. They vary in complexity and technologies used. Some of them propose maps of street art curated by experts or startups (e.g. Streetart Roma). Even the Google Cultural Institute has its own project on street art, showcasing the street view of the famous street art locations in the world and commissioned, sanctioned projects.

Others instead favour crowdsourcing, asking users to send photos and localise the artworks, such as Street Art Map Me in Milan⁴ or Street Art Cities⁵ which aims to showcase street art all over the world. The use of crowdsourcing is however complex: projects must be maintained and, when mapping is involved, need to consider ways to address uncertainty (Lasvarides and Vershbow 2014). Uncertainty is a fundamental issue for street art: even curated maps may give inaccurate information which usually results in difficult wayfinding. This is a common comment of street art hunters, people who look for street art and document it. Crowdsourcing projects must also be moderated and maintained: with street art, this would mean a constant interaction with the urban environment and an update on what is still available and what is not. With street art, it is necessary not only to add to the collection (Dunn and Hedges 2014) but theoretically to take away not-anymore-existing objects.

Moreover, crowdsourcing in heritage sometimes has a hyperlocal focus: it tends to attract people who are particularly invested in a place and have certain competencies (Stephens 2007; Dunn and Hedges 2014, 2018), therefore posing into question how partial the representation is

⁴ <http://www.streetartmapme.com/en/map-2/>.

⁵ <https://streetartcities.com/>

(Dunn and Hedges 2014), in particular, in cases like street art where heritage may have a hyper-local quality. The question of who is narrating the place and the street art remains, as much as with curated maps (Harley 2001; Dunn 2019).

There is also a proliferation of tour maps and private maps on Google My Maps, where users save and share their own street art paths and favourite artworks. Finally, others have created an additional augmented reality (AR) layer, which expands, narrates, and comments on the street art underneath, such as the Museum of Augmented Urban Art. In this case, the AR is accessible through a smartphone app, where the phone acts as a portal (Uricchio 2019). In the future, it will be interesting to see, if not only AR but also mixed reality headsets – which consider the entire space the user is immersed within and his/her movements – will be widely adopted, how these technologies may impact the experience of street art as well. However, their current state of the art limits their adoption in museums as ‘individual moments’, pauses inside the museum environment (e.g., HoloLens, see Richardson 2019). Until now, AR for street art has been mostly based on smartphones, even in cases where the AR element was designed by the artist himself/herself (e.g., Fat Heat or TvBoy) to guarantee the access to the experience to a wider audience without moving the street art away from its original place

These solutions respect the place of street art, but their approach is far from uncomplicated from a curatorial point of view. As much as more traditional museums or heritage sites, there is a problem related to the selection of street art as museum objects (Hooper Greenhill 2000; Parry 2007; Pearce 1994; Bennett 2017; Moser 2010). The selection is complicated by the urban nature of street art and the presence of heritage sites and objects which are sanctioned as Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith 2006) along with others which are not part of the discourse. Moreover, there is a question related to who selects and whose narrative these artworks are representative of, in particular considering the variety of actors involved such as local associations, street art experts, historians, and municipalities. These groups may read the urban place and street art differently.

If the selection process is, as I mentioned before, a common problem in museums, an additional problem arises with street art: its ephemerality. Because it is immersed in the urban environment and in places where street artworks commonly overlay one another, there is a risk of the mapped artworks disappearing. This covering is part of the game as much as the atmospheric damage on street art. There are some rules: particular pieces, which are highly significant or made by famous street artists, are conserved and progressively musealised, but there is always the risk of disappearance. Street art embraces disappearance as a fundamental part of the game. Ferrell (2017) defines street artworks as ghosts of the city, the remains of an invisible palimpsest. As shown above, some street artists identify more with the idea of street art as processual than the factual, final artworks. This matches Young’s (2014) idea of street art as not just an object but as a way to see the world and as a series of practices.

However, with digital mapping, it poses a central choice: is the mapping a current representation of the urban environment, albeit partial, or is it more a memory of the street art in a specific moment of time? Choosing the first option will mean continuously updating the map, a herculean task which will require almost daily updates and an always incomplete map, as shown by the crowdsourcing projects mentioned before.

If, instead, the choice of the institution is to present a snapshot in time of the place, an archive of how a place was in a certain time, we can think of examples such as Mobile M+: NEONSIGNS.HK in 2014, where photos of neon signs were collected from the audience and exhibited online along with commissioned mini-projects done by cultural figures to reflect on neon signs in Hong Kong⁶. In such an exhibition, the focus is the conservation of one moment in time. It is however problematic if the aim of a project is to organise long-term initiatives and tours because it may create expectations in the audience to see the artworks digitally mapped in the urban environment. Without a checking mechanism, street art changes remain undocumented and the result is, as it happens with Street Art Map Me in Milan, a pan-temporal representation of street art where on the map artworks which are still present are interwoven with lost ones. The street art will become a digital ghost where just one layer of the palimpsest will be displayed. If this can be said in general of street photography (Sontag 2007; Benjamin 2014), there is a difference: street art is designed to be overlaid and to disappear. Choosing just a few of them to be presented as ghosts means declaring them as heritage and creating the expectation in the visitors to see them still in the place (see for example the comments on the MAUA app on App Store). Furthermore, it interferes with the mechanisms adopted by street artists in choosing what has to be conserved (e.g., artworks done by famous street artists or which show a high level of technical skills).

Additionally, pinpointing artworks highlights them, giving them visibility. Street art situates itself in the blank gaps of the cities, in the glitches (Kindynis 2019) where there is space. Its localisation requires the user to see and experience the city differently, in moving spaces and not standing places (Young 2014), between train tracks and motorways. Street art is based on a dialectic of visibility/invisibility (Ferrell and Weide 2010), a hide-and-seek game (Ferrell 2017). Therefore, showing the artworks, making them accessible to a broader audience affects their visibility, contributing to and accelerating a process of institutionalisation (MacDowall 2019; Schacter 2017 and 2014; Young 2014) and heritagisation (Harrison 2013). This process deeply affects the relationship between public and private, which is the inherent tension within street art. Rethinking to the street art 'origin' in tagging and graffiti, the role of these practices is to leave a mark in the public place, to attribute personal ownership, to re-signify these places and to criticise them. This tension between public and private is at the core of the artistic practice of street art and it is part of the difficulty to move street art into a museum building, where its original function and public nature is lost. It is true that museum objects are memories of places and times (Merriman 1991; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Dunn et al. 2019) but, in the case of street art, the public becomes private and requires them to pass a threshold when it enters a museum, a task which is deeply influenced by the socio-cultural context (Gurian 2005).

The adopted platforms also propose a cartographic view of street art which is entirely different from the urban dwelling usually required to experience street art. The presentation of multiple times of street art recalls a god's eye view (Reddeman 2017) where multiple times and places are seen and controlled simultaneously by the visitors which see 'all the city and street art' at the same time.

⁶<https://www.neonsigns.hk/?lang=en#:~:text=Presented%20by%20M%2B%2C%20Hong%20Kong's,and%20documenting%20its%20neon%20signs.>

A final point can be made regarding the localisation and mapping of street art. Some of the artworks are illegal and, if these selections pinpoint locations and names, aggregating data, they can become a base for street artists' liability and legal trials. As MacDowall (2019) noted, this is increasingly happening with Instagram.

Localising street art: the issue of non-neutrality of digital platforms

Most of these maps are based on services such as Google Maps and Open Street Map, which present a partial representation of the urban landscape (Zook and Graham 2007; Stephens 2013). These platforms show places in a particular time and their updating rates and information are dependent on the popularity and reputation of the location⁷ (Zook and Graham 2007; Burrows et al. 2005). Moreover, as shown by Zook and Graham (2007), the ranking mechanisms of Google Maps are opaque but present search results as natural outcomes, making difficult for users to understand the non-neutrality of the search results and subsequent representation. Subsequently, it highlights or obscures places. Stephens (2013) has instead shown how in Open Street Maps the user-generated content is representative of a gendered perspective which is reflected in the information displayed and available on the platform. Therefore, the representation of places on these platforms is dependent of the power networks, the existing set of unbalanced relationships these places are embedded within (Massey 1995; Castells 2011). Google Maps' progressive release of features, which usually starts from a Western, English-speaking world, is based on a Western, consumer perspective.⁸ Its popularity spans from its ability to rank and provide accurate information. It is the continuous use of people which guarantees it the data to maintain its popularity. However, because it is so dependent on users' information and behaviours, the presence of certain narratives online influences the way it represents (or not) places. For example, the analysis of Power et al. (2012) has shown how Street View has contributed to the stigmatisation of Moyross, a council estate in Limerick, Ireland, initially hiding it from the map, making it invisible and then not updating it, perpetuating the divisions and power relationships within society.

The mentioned platforms are not used everywhere: for example, in China, Baidu Maps is used. However, it is based on the same principle (Wang 2019): the more a place is explored, used, experienced, the more data the platform will have on that location, therefore representing the set of relationships the place is immersed within. Furthermore, it hides and presents a specific point of view: for example, Killing et al. (2020) have shown how it does not represent detainment centres in Xinjiang. Moreover, the way these platforms are realised and for what audience is dependent on their place of founding and background: Google Maps and Silicon Valley, Baidu and China, Naver and South Korea. For example, the data on South Korea on Google Maps are partial and outdated due to South Korean laws (Baldage and

⁷ Google Maps updated information is dependent on business owners, local guides and users and by their choices and interests. The same applies to contributions which users can submit after having visited a place and of the digital skills of the users.

⁸ For example, Google first offered a more detailed view of pedestrian routes map in London, New York, and San Francisco (Perez 2020).

Cullen 2018) while on Naver, results are usually in Korean instead of English and targeted for a Korean audience in South Korea.⁹

Going back to contexts where the most commonly used platform for mapping is Google Maps, the issue is quite clear: using the Street View in Milan to localise street artworks is a slightly frustrating experience because the artworks may have changed over time. One of the most interesting examples is the Sarita in Via Pontano¹⁰, one of the main street art location in the city. The artwork has recently been overlaid by another one (Elena 2020): it was created on a free wall but the Sarita became the symbol of the neighbourhood. Its disappearance, therefore, sparked a debate on street art, conservation and musealisation. On Google Street Maps, the artwork is still existent¹¹.

The case study: The Museum of Augmented Urban Art in Milan

To explore the tensions between street art, digital technologies, and mapping, a case study was selected: the Museum of Augmented Urban Art (MAUA) in Milan, in the North-West of Italy. The museum was created in 2017 and it presents a selection of 55 street artworks in some of the peripheric neighbourhoods in Milan (Giambellino-Lorenteggio, Adriano-Padova-Rizzoli, Corvetto-Chiaravalle-Porto di Mare, Niguarda-Bovisa, QT8-Gallaratese¹²). If this museum is not the first widespread museum of street art in Italy with an urban focus (e.g., MuRo, Rome), it is however the first which systematically adopts digital tools as the core for its practice. There is no physical museum, no building, but the street art is instead mapped via an app and left in its original setting. If other experiences, such as the mapping mentioned above in Rome or Milan, have explored the potential of the digital, it is the first example of officially sanctioned digital museum of street art. Moreover, it is not based on street art commissions (e.g., MAU, Turin), but it collected and represented street art which was available in the urban environment before the start of the mapping process and it was perceived as significant by local students. Additionally, the museum does not have official curators but it is born by the collaborations of digital artists and stakeholders.

It is composed not only by street artworks but the artworks have also been interpreted and augmented by AR creatives/artists whose works comment, add, and reinterpret the original artworks. The museum is available through app and catalogues; it is experienceable in-place and 'at home' through the mobile app and the multiple available texts (catalogues, flyers, posters). The AR is accessible through mobile, acting as a portal and opening the experience of street art into another space which is always dependent by the portal (Uricchio 2019), the phone of the user, and the ability of the phone to recognise the image of the artwork and trigger the AR. The AR layer is dependent by the point of view of the user and his/her phone.

⁹ For example, searching 'Europe', the search result are agencies in South Korea which offer tours in Europe.

¹⁰ See <https://mauamuseum.com/works/sarita-colonia-di-milano/>.

¹¹ <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Via+Giovanni+Pontano,+696,+20127+Milano+MI,+Italy/@45.4950635,9.2285373,3a,75y,303.31h,93.82t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sfUqXXjHn90UadE2QtE26tA!2e0!7i16384!8i8192!4m5!3m4!1s0x4786c71cf5d557f9:0x8f115acc50698a54!8m2!3d45.496287!4d9.226307>

¹² <https://www.streetartfactory.eu/en/maua/>.

Furthermore, the aim of the project has been to move tourism from the city centre, to make people explore the neighbourhoods and to go beyond the usual narrative associated with them as dangerous and uninteresting. Doing so, it opens another narrative, a sort of peripheric mythology which presents them as alternative and authentic, a mythology reinforced by the street art presence (Andron 2018).

The museum has multiple branches in Milan, Turin, and Palermo. The choice to focus only on the Milan branch was due to it being the second one created, therefore it has been present within the city for a suitable amount of time (since January 2018). If this amount of time seems at first minimal, in particular compared with the age of physical institutions, it is necessary to consider the high turnover of digital projects: some of these projects have a limited time frame or are not updated or are abandoned due to technological developments. For example, in Milan, see the lack of updates of the Quarto Stato AR app, published in the same time period as the MAUA.

Finally, as mentioned before, the museum was sanctioned and funded by the Comune di Milano. In Palermo, where the first branch was created, the process was not even defined as a museum: the definition emerged later in Milan. With the last branch, Turin, the project was defined as a museum from the start, showing how street art and AR have been progressively institutionalised.

Furthermore, this recognition of the MAUA as a museum is particularly significant in the context of Milan street art: as explained by multiple stakeholders (local associations, artists, museum staff, street art guides), street art has been criminalised in Milan. There has never been a unified project to connect various group of street artists. Consequently, street artists tended to create local groups, usually with political connotations, separated and in competition with one another, such as the one born around the Leoncavallo, an anarchist-occupied youth centre. The museum was the first official recognition of street art as heritage but also the first-time artists from different neighbourhoods ended up being connected thanks to the unplaceness of the digital mapping and the AR.

The double narratives of the MAUA: AR and Street Art

These two layers, the street art and the AR, interact with each other, where the AR adds a multisensory experience and an additional complexity to the street art. The AR is inspired by and dependent on the street art, which is its trigger. If the street art is damaged, cancelled, or altered for more than 70%, the AR layer becomes unavailable and ‘untriggerable’.

However, the AR comments and presents, because it is made by a different artist, an alternative way and narrative from the street art. Some street artists appreciated this and commented on how it was part of the artist’s liberty of creating. Nevertheless, the AR work should be respectful and not cover street artworks completely or cancel their narrative. For others, instead, it would be nice to be more involved in the AR process, contributing to the interpretation of their own artworks, but they were fine with their artworks being interpreted by someone else.

The digital ghost of the street art

The MAUA has decided to conserve the points indicating the artworks originally mapped in 2017 and the connected AR to guarantee the accessibility of the AR through websites, posters and catalogues. As explained by the museum, it would have been possible to change the application and ask it to recognise the new artwork. However, the digital artworks are designed to be connected to the physical ones. Therefore, they decided to leave the connections between the lost physical artwork and the digital one and to let the catalogue remain as an archive, ‘an historical memory of Milan of 2017’.

The dependency of AR on street art complicates further the mapping and the relationship with time. The AR is potentially always accessible as long as the gate, the street art or its own reproduction, remains open. Therefore, even if street art is cancelled, maintaining their images and locations makes the AR accessible. The memory of the place becomes at the same time selected and (un)bounded, a sensation exalted by the online mapping. Accessing the AR and street art in the actual place where it was located, is similar to an encounter with one of the ghosts of the city: one of the various layers is selected and presented as (forever) digitally present.

However, in this case, users are not accessing the place and the object, but the memory of the place and the disappeared object (Dunn et al. 2019; Merriman 1991; Gosden and Marshall 1999) where the object was. Street art, as I said before, is born to be ephemeral, and is therefore different from a museum object. It presents a memory of something that is not supposed to be conserved but it is supposed to be overlaid according to different rules and networks of power relationships. Moreover, it is doing it *in situ*: in a museum building or physical heritage site the conservation of memory is expected because the museum is a controlled environment. This memory conservation is not expected for street art within the urban landscape. The main memory becomes the AR one and, in an unexpected turn, it is the digital which determines what in the physical realm is remembered and conserved.

Conserving and presenting one layer over the other due to the existence of the AR creates an inversion of the intuitively understood relationship between digital and physical narratives. It is actually the AR which determines the conservation of the street art and its institutionalisation. For example, in 2018 *Cucimilano*¹³, an artwork done by Zed1 near the central neighbourhood of Porta Romana in Milan, was part of a controversy where the owner of the wall wanted to expand the place for advertising (Robertiello 2019). One of the reasons it did not happen was because the MAUA, as officially sanctioned museum of street art, explained how the change of the dimension of the advertisement space would have made the AR inaccessible. The project of expanding the advertising space was abandoned. This is an example of how the ownership and belonging to an authorised institution justified the conservation and recognition of the artwork within the city landscape.

At the same time, the street art legitimises the AR as being musealised and ‘heritagised’ (Harrison 2013) due to its progressive recognition as art form and symbol of place (MacDowall 2019; Schacter 2017; Young 2014). Street art is increasingly born by collaborations between

¹³ See <https://mauamuseum.com/works/gusto-tailor-made/>.

artists and local associations and institutions which looks at street art as a legitimization tool to gain recognition of their role and of their place within the city narrative.

When multiple narratives come into play: The MAUA as contact zone and memoryscape

With this process of musealisation and the interaction of multiple memories and narratives, the museum becomes an arena for urban memory, where diverse ideas of the city and the street art interact and potentially contradict each other. In a situation where the neighbourhoods and the physical street art are not accessible, as it happened during the COVID-19 lockdown,¹⁴ the AR becomes the only available memory of the neighbourhoods and of the street art. The museum proposed to users this experience of virtual touring which reflected not the contemporary situation of the neighbourhood but the memory available online.

Moreover, the MAUA and the street art objects become contact zones (Clifford 1997), where different narratives and ideas of heritage and place come into contact. Clifford defines museum collections as a set of exchanges between cultures. These relationships are not equal, but they are influenced by the broader networks the collections and the museums are immersed within. Notwithstanding, these zones can become discussion zones where multiple narratives are presented, contested and discussed. Massey (1995) has analysed how place narratives' purpose is to establish and state a specific 'envelope of space-time': the history of a place is selected to establish an identity, a name and boundaries. They are re-telling of the past in the present which aims to 'bound the place', to make it 'static' and to determine its future.

In this case, there is an ongoing contact between the everyday narrative of the place, the neighbourhoods which are usually narrated by media as dangerous and unsafe, and the heritage narrative which defines the place as having 'worth', authorised and expressed through the app and the presence of the digital museum, and a third local narrative which looks into an 'authentic', alternative, working-class, community-based identity, encapsulated by the 'streetartness' (Andron 2018) of these places. The museum is, therefore, a point of friction, contestation, and discussion. However, one of these narratives has an edge: the heritage narrative is sanctioned by the official institutions, therefore proposing the authorised memory.

The museum becomes a memoryscape (Edensor 1997; Gristwood 2014). Edensor defines memoryscape as 'the organisation of specific objects in space, resulting from often successive projects which attempt to materialise memory by assembling iconographic forms'. The past is selected and displayed within the landscape and subsequently sanctioned.

However, this displaying is not marked by a physical construction such as a monument but by a digital layer which is potentially available anywhere and anytime. Nothing suggests the existence of the MAUA in the physical landscape. For example, travelling in Via Pontano, the visitor will encounter sanctioned and unsanctioned street art but the digital layer, if the visitors are able to access it (Uricchio 2019), will highlight and declare what it is the 'heritagised' street art.

¹⁴ In Italy, during the lockdown, people could not travel farther than 200 m from their home.

The digital narrative of the place is available online, therefore influencing how the place is read and interpreted (Zook and Graham 2007; Dunn 2019; Keightley and Reading 2014). Zook and Graham (2017) define it as DigiPlace, ‘the understanding of a location based on and filtered through information about a place that is available in cyberspace’. In this blending of digital and physical, hardware and software, place and AR, past and present collapse, presenting the authorised memory as ever-present (Hoskins 2017), provided the user has a connection and a smartphone. The user can access the memory of the street art, the AR and the mapping performed by the MAUA in 2017 even if the artwork is not available anymore, making therefore its memory potentially forever-present and sanctioned in the urban landscape.

Conclusion

The adoption of digital mapping and AR in the MAUA has unexpected effects on street art. It places street art within the place, within the boundaries of the city: because it makes street art visible, it drastically changes the hide-and-seek game of street art. It does not move street art away from the place, guaranteeing its site-specificity. However, it makes it visible and highlights its presence and its value as memory and narrative within the city.

Nevertheless, it also unplaces street art, making visible just a part of the palimpsest: it selects and dis-connects street art from the place using both the AR and the digital mapping. The digital mapping presents and authorises a different holistic way of seeing street art in the urban environment, a god’s eye view (Reddeman 2017; Plangen 2008) which attributes authority and artistic quality to specific pieces of street art which have to be conserved.

The presence of AR contributes to the potential accessibility of the street art anywhere and anytime. The AR, therefore, creates a digital and physical blended memoryscape: the street art, in conjunction with AR, is at the same time placed and unplaced, bounded and unbounded and the museum becomes the authorised way to perceive this art form within the urban landscape, subsequently influencing and changing the narrative of the place, the neighbourhoods.

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