

Conference: 'Glocal street art', artists and academics to meet in Rennes for an international conference



As a member of the Centre d'études des langues et littératures anciennes et modernes de Rennes 2, can you explain the links between street art and languages and literature?

Edwige Comoy Fusaro: Like any form of artistic expression, street art communicates and produces narratives. It is an art that combines several languages, notably iconographic and verbal, in a use that is connotative, which is to say that it conveys a tacit meaning. Street art handles in particular the irony, the metaphor, and plays much on the detour. For example, most people know these forbidden meanings where a white bar has been used to do something else - works by Clet Abraham, a Breton who lives in Florence. Street art is post-modern in that it works a lot with quotations, references to pop culture (comics, manga, cinema, series) but also to culture in general. During my last stay in Italy at the end of 2021, I discovered a lot of street art about Dante: it was the 700th anniversary of his death. There is a will among these artists to rely on a cultural heritage, local or global, to say something other than what is immediately said by the work, there is both the implicit and the explicit. It is very literary at its core! A literary work says something else than what it says literally, it assumes a timeless and universal dimension that exceeds its anchoring. In street art, as in literature, the work extracts itself from its locality to become global.



The distortion of a traffic sign in Florence

What does the word "glocal", used in the title of the conference, actually mean?

E. C. F.: The word, formed from the combining of "global" and "local", is a term that was born about twenty years ago in English-speaking studies to designate phenomena that we have seen emerge in the wake of globalization, since the 1990s, of the pendulum swinging between a return to the territories and a planetary expansion. Street art illustrates this concept very well since it is the first worldwide movement in the history of art, in which there is at the same time always a flagrant will to emphasize the value of the space where the works are located. For example, in the anthology of languages used, even if English is privileged as a language of international communication, other rarer languages are used, some of which are based on a local identity, like Latin in Italy for example.



A portrait of Dante in Florence

What are the main themes of the symposium?

We will be focusing on 'places', that is to say we'll be examining the question of the effects of the place of production or diffusion of a work: does it have the same meaning and the same function when it is placed in a physical environment (on a one-way sign, a sidewalk or an electrical cabinet) and when its image circulates on social networks? Clearly not, nor does it have the same reception. The works of street art are, originally, works conceived 'in situ', produced for a specific site and taking meaning in this site. For example, Ernest Pignon-Ernest, one of the pioneers of street art, put up posters representing Pasolini on the lido of Ostia, near Rome, where the poet was murdered, for the 40th anniversary of his death. And since street art works are also ephemeral, in that they are often polluted or eliminated, we see them circulating in the form of image by photo or video, especially on social networks or artists' websites. Moreover, these artists work in clandestinely, but they do need to eat like everyone, and those who are recognized can thus have a parallel artistic activity in the institutional world, exhibit and sell their work in galleries. So the question of 'places' is a crucial issue for this art.

We'll also be looking at the concepts of 'narratives' and 'identities', which refer to the 'glocalization' already mentioned, to the references to both territorial cultures and to the planetary macroculture. The works go beyond local particularities, the feeling of belonging to a parish, while valuing local specificities.



The small Superman of Bouchon on rue St Malo in Rennes.

Can you tell us about some of the expected highlights of the conference?

E. C. F.: Yes, we're excited about the presence of two artists in particular: The Blind, an artist from Nantes who is very active on the Breton scene, in residence at Rennes 2 this year; and RNST, who intervened at the *Ateliers du vent* in Rennes in December 2021 and who will be working on the wall of Rue Vasselot just after the conference. We will also have, among the 16 speakers, a doctoral student who is an artist himself and who is conducting research work, thus representing the current

research trends in the field. There will also be a guided tour of the works of the art of the Villejean campus by students of the Master's degree "*Médiation du patrimoine*" as well as a photo exhibition of 48 works of street art in the hall of building L. Those who wish to do so will also be able to go and see the exhibition "(In)visibles" at the Chambre Claire gallery (photographs by Mathias Bones, tactile and pictorial intervention by The Blind).

See the complete program of the conference "Glocal street art. Places, identities, narratives", organized by Edwige Comoy Fusaro and Hélène Gaillard (University of Burgundy), on February 24 and 25, 2022, in hybrid format (in-person + distance learning).

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