

Beyond the wall: street art in the fight against the Camorra

Luca Palermo*

Dipartimento di Lettere e Beni Culturali, University of Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli', Italy

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The attempt to halt the remorseless spread of organised crime in the Italian South should not just be an issue for the judges, investigating magistrates and forces of order; every citizen should feel that they are an integral part of a wind of change, coming from below, that can have a decisive impact on local society. Starting from this premise, art and culture, adopting an approach of participation and involvement, can play a primary role in processes of renewal. In various areas within the provinces of Naples and Caserta, carefully researched works of street art, with the direct involvement of the local population, have provided the means for intervention in decaying and marginal environments where organised crime seemed to be so well entrenched as to be ineradicable. This article presents four case studies, analysing their assumptions, methodology and objectives.

Keywords: social inclusion; urban regeneration; participation; organised crime; street art; Campania

Introduction

On 23 June 1992, at a ceremony one month after the death of the anti-mafia magistrate Giovanni Falcone, his friend and colleague Paolo Borsellino declared that ‘the fight against the mafia [...] must be a cultural and moral movement that involves us all, especially the young, the most able to feel the beauty of the fresh scent of liberty: this helps us to reject the stink of moral compromise, indifference, proximity and, therefore, complicity’.¹ In recent years the ‘cultural and moral movement’ referred to by Borsellino has been put into practice right across the Italian South, including the region of Campania, where organised crime has managed, over time, to penetrate and establish itself within every level of society.

The expressive energy of ‘street art’ derives in particular from its distinctive ability to enter spaces that other media never reach, and to speak to the outskirts, border zones and crumbling buildings. The intention of this article is to show how street art can make the maximum use of this energy in order to communicate with all sectors of the population, and thus to trigger processes that are not only cultural but also social (relating to the sense of belonging and historical identity) and economic (relating to local development). Street art was born in a spirit of anti-capitalism and revolt, and has been seen by some as a nuisance and by others as an instrument for communicating dissent. Today, however, it seems to be losing its informal and revolutionary nature in order to become part of official programmes for urban regeneration, promoted both by local councils and by cultural bodies with aspirations to innovation, and is thus often rendered harmless and quietly reassuring (Abarca 2009; Bengtsen 2013; Bianchini 1993; Loeb 2014; Young 2014).

*Email: lucaplrm@gmail.com

Street art is not just art that uses public space, but a type of art that almost corresponds to this space, is a distinctive feature of it, makes it special and welcoming to its users, and takes on an instructional and social role in relation to an increasingly wider public. As a result, to quote Linda Shearer, ‘monologues have become dialogues’ (1988, 7); art can be regarded ‘as a forum for dialogue or social activism [which] gained in power and effectiveness by being situated in the real world’ (Jacob 1994, 53).

The Campania region, and the provinces of Naples and Caserta in particular, have often featured in the national and international news as a result of episodes of violence related to the activity of Camorra gangs. As we will see, in the areas examined here street art has greater potential due to the difficult socio-economic situation, which for far too long has limited the area’s social development and cultural life.

In the case studies discussed in this article, the focus on art has involved launching regeneration processes that relate not only to the physical environment but also, and especially, to the dynamics of local society, since the purpose of any artistic display that is not restricted to formal environments but chooses public space as its arena must necessarily be to generate thinking that can transform a location into a cultural resource, ‘humanising’ and ‘beautifying’ the city and its outskirts (Deutsche 1991, 49): ‘art that raises viewpoints for inclusion in the public debate can support a vibrant cultural, social, and political atmosphere that is essential to meaningful civic discussion’ (McCoy 1997, 6).

It is important that this kind of intervention fosters a sense of identity: it is my belief that art needs to abandon its protective shell of self-reference and engage with the city’s social complexities, especially at its margins, in order to find new ways of moving forward in social, moral and political terms.

Beauty, art and social responsibility are thus the principal features of the street art initiatives discussed here. Their aim has been to respond to the need for moral conduct by starting with aesthetic initiatives that have the capacity to revive the positive energy of these areas, an energy that has long been buried under a thick layer of injustice and illegality:

Like the press, one role of street art is to form social consciousness. In authoritarian systems where outlets for free expression are limited, it is one of the few gauges of political sentiment. In more open systems, street art enables various entities to lobby for their interests. Street art, in essence, connotes a decentralized, democratic form in which there is universal access, and the real control over messages comes from the social producers. (Chaffee 1993, 4)

In my view, the vast communicative potential of street art lies in the direct and unmediated relationship that can be established between the artist and the public at whom their work is directed: a sort of open and honest dialogue that has become increasingly rare in a world of contemporary art that is often characterised by excessive obscurity, impenetrability, and the clinical spaces that have to be addressed.²

As we will see, street art, especially in difficult areas like the outskirts of Naples and the province of Caserta, is entirely at home in the terrain of ‘social activism, social outrage and creativity’ (Lewisohn 2008, 153); this allows it to become the vehicle for a message whose construction starts with an ‘economy of words and ideas, and rhetorically simple discourse’ (Chaffee 1993, 9). For these reasons, the University of Campania ‘Luigi Vanvitelli’ formed a partnership with the organisation ‘Inward’ (‘Osservatorio sulla creatività urbana’), which has a particular development model for the field of urban creativity and works on public projects, with private agencies, on not-for-profit initiatives and in the international arena. In order to make their contribution to the fight against organised crime, they decided to put their energies into art-based initiatives, in view of the fact that art:

- can stimulate creativity, thus assisting people in the resolution of social problems;
- stimulates dialogue and encounters between people, irrespective of the level of their formal education;

- encourages its audience to question themselves and imagine possible future situations;
- offers opportunities for self-expression, a particular feature of active citizenship;
- has outcomes that cannot necessarily be predicted, and which as a result arouse people's interest and entertain them.

The initiatives discussed here have all been the product of a public–private organisational and financial partnership: Inward and the University put forward the project concept, identify the artists, and start looking for the financial sponsorship to guarantee the project's success. In the case of Casapesenna, the University had the support of Agrorinasce, a cooperative association. In the other cases, Inward identified the various financial arrangements most suited to each project: for the mural 'Chi è vultu bene, nun s'ò scorda' in Ponticelli, support from the large multinational company Ceres; for 'Gennaro' in Forcella, sponsorship by small businesses in the area; and, finally, crowdfunding for the work in memory of Giancarlo Siani.

As will already be clear, this article is somewhat different in style, methodology and objectives from the work on history, economics and politics that *Modern Italy* normally offers, but it too illustrates a new aspect of Italian cultural modernity. I will be demonstrating the extent to which humanistic culture can have a practical impact on the social and cultural development of the population in areas that are seriously affected by the presence of organised crime.

Case study 1: Ponticelli

Ponticelli is a quarter of Naples on the city's eastern side, with about 75,000 residents in an area of just over 9 square kilometres: a population density of about 8,300 inhabitants per square kilometre. It has been a difficult area, well away from the city centre, and over time it has proved to be fertile ground for the introduction of a large number of illegal activities by organised crime (Barbagallo 1999).

On the evening of 11 November 1989, four innocent people, who were guilty of nothing more than drinking coffee at the little tables of the Sayonara bar, were killed by the Camorra: Gaetano De Cicco, Salvatore Benaglia, Domenico Guarracino and Gaetano Di Nocera. From that point onwards, it seems, Ponticelli struggled to recover. At the time there had been a battle under way in the area between clans: men from the Sarno-Aprea gang burst into the bar to kill four members from the rival clan, opened fire, and continued to shoot as they left the building, killing six: two *camorristi* and the four innocent bystanders (Corsi 1989).

Almost 20 years later, in May 2008, another traumatic event indicated divisions in the quarter: popular unrest led to an attack on the local Roma camp, which was burnt down.

The forces of order respond and the magistrates investigate, but culture and beauty go missing. This has resulted in the need to intervene in the quarter on an aesthetic level as well as in other ways, in the knowledge that the fight against the Camorra needs to be accompanied by broader action for urban and social regeneration. It was therefore a deliberate choice by Inward to locate its headquarters in this area; the intention was to plan periodic street art initiatives that could make a direct impact on the urban and social fabric, which in turn was identified as the backdrop for aesthetic activity. Within the quarter, Inward has been responsible for the peaceful and colourful invasion of Parco Merola, where four large works of art have been completed which have radically altered the park's appearance. Local residents have been encouraged to get directly involved in the projects, which have all been designed to start from key words such as 'progresso', 'rinascita' and 'legalità' ('progress', 'rebirth' and 'legality').

To grasp not only the aesthetic strength of these works but also, and perhaps above all, their moral force, it should be borne in mind that it was actually from Parco Merola that people had set out to set fire to the Roma camp in 2008. This unfortunate story was the starting point for



Figure 1. Jorith AGOch, *Ael. Tutt'egual song' e creatur*, Ponticelli, Naples. Photo: Luca Sorbo

the first of the initiatives hosted by the park: the work undertaken by Jorith AGOch with its evocative title in Neapolitan dialect, '*Ael. Tutt'egual song' e creatur*' ('*Ael. The children are all equal*') (Fig. 1).³

The face of the Roma girl Ael, an emblematic symbol of suffering and marginalisation, is accompanied by a pile of books to remind us that the desire for integration, just like acceptance, is arrived at through education: this is what makes people want to challenge the Camorra and every form of racial discrimination, opening the local population up to accepting the 'other' and distancing themselves from organised crime.

In the same quarter, and in the very same residential complex of Parco Merola, three other building walls have been 'decorated'. A puppet holding a computer game joystick, symbolising tradition and modernity in defence of play and the right to be children, is the focal point of the work '*A pazziella 'n man' e creature*' ('*Play in the hands of children*') undertaken by the street artist ZED1 (Fig. 2).

The mural in Ponticelli by the Sicilian artists Rosk and Lose, '*Chi è vult bene, nun s'ò scorda*' ('*Those who are loved do not forget*'), portrays two children with a football in the shirts of the Napoli and Argentina teams: two future men who dream of Maradona and the victory that comes from the street (Fig. 3). These are not the children of today but their parents, who were once children too. Sport puts the parents and their children on the same level. On the streets of Ponticelli, just as everywhere else in Naples, there is never a shortage of balls and pitches, often improvised, where people can play: football unites, and at the same time provides a moment of opposition and of respect for the rules. The research director of Inward, Luca Borriello, quoted by Zagaria, has discussed the work by Rosk and Lose:

The intention of this contribution is to refer once again to the importance of a path of education: once the person who is loved now, as a child, becomes an adult and a parent, perhaps they will not forget the love they were given and will make the same gift to their children, and so on for ever. Play, kids, play and have fun. (Zagaria 2015)

The final work undertaken in Ponticelli's Parco Merola, in chronological terms, is '*Lo trattenemiento de' peccerille*' ('*The enjoyment of the littlest ones*') by Mattia Campo Dall'Orto (Fig. 4).⁴



Figure 2. ZED1, *A pazziella 'n man' e creature*, Ponticelli, Naples. Photo: Luca Sorbo



Figure 3. Rosk & Loste, *Chi è vulut bene, nun s'o scorda*, Ponticelli, Naples. Photo: Francesco Rinaldi



Figure 4. Mattia Campo Dall'Orto, *Lo trattenemiento de' peccerille*, Ponticelli, Naples. Photo: Luca Sorbo

The artist decided to portray the faces and stories of the community living there, and sought to extol the various features of this community. Central to the work are two children holding the book *Lo cunto de li cunti* by Giambattista Basile, whose subtitle became the title for the mural; they are absorbed in reading, and above their heads are depicted figures launched by their imagination. The work emphasises the importance of reading, the stimulation of creativity, and the reinterpretation of our own lives.

This project, like the others described above, was conceived and realised by Inward after a careful survey of the area overseen by the organisation 'Psicologi in Contatto', which first of all drew attention to the inner workings of the environment where the work was to be undertaken. They had noticed a particular abandonment by the youngest children of reading: the book as an object, and children's capacity to immerse themselves in narrative worlds whose principal aim is to boost creative potential. In socio-cultural environments on the margins, this proves to be really important for the ability of developing children to be autonomous and outward-looking, removing them for a moment from the fate to which even the youngest seem condemned. To add to the execution of the street art piece, a scheme was developed for sharing donated books within apartment blocks: the idea was to encourage reading among the children and young people in the eastern outskirts of Naples. Every child who read the book that had inspired the mural wrote about or drew what they wanted on specially provided post-it notes and then, strengthened by their own

creativity, passed the book on to another child, who passed it to yet another, until these reading trails crossed over among the buildings.

The ultimate purposes of this operation were thus socialisation and boosting the potential of the children in the Parco Merola area, helping them to experience their own daily life in a spirit of fertile imagination.

These four works of street art that were conceived and undertaken for Ponticelli's Parco Merola have been part of an ongoing socio-cultural operation that has been aimed in particular at the younger residents of the quarter: in this way, art becomes an occasion for redemption, possibility and escape, and makes it clear how the achievement of legality and opposition to the Camorra in all its forms are the necessary preconditions for any path towards civic development.

Case study 2: *Gennaro*, in Forcella

Forcella is a quarter of Naples within the city's old centre. Ruled over by the boss of the Giuliano clan Luigi Giuliano in the 1980s and 1990s, this area played, and possibly continues to play, an important role in the Camorra's thinking about the capital of the Campania region.

It was in Forcella that on 27 May 2004 Annalisa Durante, an innocent victim of the Camorra, was killed at only 14 years of age during an attack on Salvatore Giuliano, the nephew of one of the Giuliano brothers, when he used her body as a shield (Bufi 2004; Sannino 2004). Forcella was also the quarter where the Neapolitan priest Don Luigi Merola was operating: he had long been engaged in the battle against organised crime, in raising awareness about legality, and in the development of civic awareness based on strong moral values (Merola 2007).

In Piazza Crocelle ai Mannesi, at the gates to this quarter, at the instigation of Inward and the Naples city council, Jorit AGOch has created a large face of the city's patron saint, depicted in vivid colours and wearing an intense and human expression (Fig. 5). However, in this case San Gennaro's features do not correspond to his conventional representation in the iconography, and this has generated a free process of 'attribution' by the quarter's residents: people saw in him first of all the footballer Maradona, then the actor Viviani, and finally Nunzio Giuliano, a prominent member of the Camorra clan of the same name. This last interpretation created significant problems because of the conflict over control of this area between two Camorra clans, relating to the Mazarella and Giuliano families. Nunzio, a poet and writer, had left the clan after the death of his 17-year-old son from an overdose, and had spoken out, including on television, against the Camorra system. He was killed in Naples on 27 March 2005, in Via Tasso, and his alleged killers have remained at liberty.

The artist himself contributed to this discussion by revealing that the model inspiring his 'Gennaro' was one of his friends, an honest young worker whose origins were as humble as the saint's are said to have been. He was chosen by AGOch to fulfil the ideal of bringing together San Gennaro's saintly nature with the body of the Neapolitan population, while at the same time restoring a full-blown humanity to the patron saint's face.

The decision to locate this work at the entrance to one of the city's troubled quarters, where organised crime still has a strong presence, meant putting this humanised saint forward once again, and in perpetuity, to protect the people of Naples, just as in the past when his statue was placed at the foot of Mount Vesuvius to counter the advance of the lava. It has been a secular way of asking the protector of the city for assistance in the process of reappropriating urban spaces and overcoming the city's deterioration, both physical and spiritual.

In this case, too, street art has fully discharged its responsibilities as an instrument with the capacity to promote policies of social inclusion, public censure and development: a means of



Figure 5. Jorith AGOch, *Gennaro*, Forcella, Naples. Photo: Inward

restoring the harmony that is an essential condition for the release of morality, wellbeing and respect for the rule of law.

Case study 3: Orticanoodles for Giancarlo Siani

On 23 September 1985, on Via Vincenzo Romaniello in Naples, the journalist Giancarlo Siani, aged 26, was savagely murdered, just a few metres from where he lived, by the Camorra killers Ciro Cappuccio and Armando Del Core (Di Fiore 2016).

In his articles, the young Giancarlo had always shown a particular interest in the social issues of deprivation and marginalisation, identifying those suffering from these ills as the main supply of labour for organised crime (Siani 2007). To start with, he analysed the social phenomenon of crime; he then went on to investigate the criminal development of the various Camorra families, exploring the specific trajectories of particular individuals.

The decision to kill Siani was taken after the publication of one of his articles, in the newspaper *Il Mattino* on 10 June 1985, which discussed how the carabinieri had succeeded in arresting Valentino Gionta, the boss of Torre Annunziata (still in prison in 2017, with a life sentence). He explained that Gionta had become an ally of the powerful boss Lorenzo Nuvoletta, a friend of Totò Riina and his point of reference in Campania. Nuvoletta had a problem with another powerful Camorra boss, with all-out war about to break out between them: the only way of avoiding this was to meet the demands of this other boss by eliminating Gionta. As Nuvoletta did not want to betray the honour of a mafioso by having an ally killed, he set up Gionta's arrest by getting an associate to tip off the carabinieri. Siani's source was a friend who was a carabinieri captain; when his article appeared, it unleashed the wrath of the Torre Annunziata *camorristi*.



Figure 6. Orticannoodles, *Un murale per Giancarlo Siani*, Vomero, Naples. Photo: Inward

In order not to lose face with his allies in Torre Annunziata, Lorenzo Nuvoletta, with Riina's approval, ordered Siani's death.

On the initiative of the quarter's residents, Inward, with the newspaper *Il Mattino* itself as its media partner, planned for the Italian street artist duo known as 'Orticannoodles' to execute a large mural, 38 metres long, on the very same street where the journalist lost his life.⁵ The intention was to use various frames – 26 in fact, the same number as the journalist's age – to talk about the ideals to which Giancarlo Siani had dedicated his whole life: legality and civic awareness (Fig. 6). The images are interspersed with maxims from characters who had influenced the path taken by the young journalist, from Alda Merini to Nelson Mandela and from Benjamin Constant to Alexis De Tocqueville.

The work was predominantly executed in two particular colours: green, the colour both of hope and of the car in which Siani died, a Citroën Mehari, which was subsequently recovered and became a symbol of redemption; and sepia-grey, in reference to the ink of his Olivetti M80 typewriter and the typical tones of many of his photographs.⁶ The journalist has become an authentic symbol of the fight against the Camorra, and it was intended that the work dedicated to him would be the starting point for a virtuous circle in which his memory would generate continuing social engagement.

The mural was the outcome of a crowdfunding initiative supported by the quarter's residents, who wanted to emphasise, once again, that they had nothing to do with organised crime and that they sided with the rule of law.

The dates for the start and finish of the work to bring the mural into being were chosen deliberately: it began on 19 September 2016, Giancarlo Siani's birthday, and concluded on 23 September 2016, exactly 31 years after his death.

Case study 4: **Giò Pistone and Alberonero for Casapesenna**

The story of Pasquale Miele is much like that of many others who through no fault of their own have lost their lives because of organised crime. He was a young businessman, just 28 years old, who ran a small clothing factory together with two of his brothers and their father Tamaro. On 6 November 1989, Pasquale was killed by two Camorra men at his house in Grumo Nevano, in the province of Naples. The investigation quickly focused in on the world of protectionism, and

the police had little doubt: the execution had been carried out by a gang who had been ordered to intimidate the Miele family.

A little less than three years later, on 6 August 1992 at Villa Literno in the province of Caserta, four assassins killed Antonio Diana, the owner of an engineering workshop, Nicola Palumbo, one of the employees there, and Antonio Di Bona, a farm worker who happened to be there at the time of the attack. Di Bona had brought his tractor in to be repaired: a chance occurrence unrelated to the vendetta between clans that lay behind the triple murder. There was at the time a feud between the clan headed by Francesco Schiavone, nicknamed 'Sandokan', and the gang led by the Venosa family. The police quickly concluded that the target of the killers was the workshop's proprietor, Diana, a relative of Raffaele Diana who was a member of the Schiavone gang. Di Bona and Palumbo, it was thought, had to be killed too because otherwise they would have been inconvenient witnesses; as a result, these two were recognised by Italy's Ministry of the Interior as having been innocent victims of organised crime.

In the neighbouring district of Casapesenna, also in the province of Caserta, fear of the Camorra has grown over the last 30 years in step with the growth of the Camorra itself: the local population is reluctant to discuss organised crime for fear of the consequences. Since the 1980s, the town's political and management apparatus has been a sort of plaything for the local Camorra clan; this environment has allowed local organised crime to become one of the strongest and most violent criminal groupings both within the region of Campania and at a national level. An organisation that is so rooted in the urban and social fabric of the town of Casapesenna has of course impinged on the daily lives of the residents, but also on the economic and cultural development of the entire area. Teresa Caldeira, while not talking about this particular context, has provided a helpful explanation of the consequences of a heightened presence of organised crime for a particular area:

Usually an experience of violent crime is followed by reactions like enclosing the home, moving, restricting children's activities, hiring private guards, not going out at night, and avoiding certain areas of town, all actions that reinforce a feeling of loss and restriction as well as the perception of a chaotic existence in a dangerous place. (2000, 28)

The relatives of Pasquale Miele and Antonio Di Bona established the organisation *Terra Nuova* to provide a focal point for social engagement, and in order to teach the younger generations about resistance to the Camorra. They were given a building confiscated from the boss of the Venosa clan in Casapesenna, in the heart of the notorious 'Terra dei Fuochi', where the *Centro di aggregazione giovanile per l'arte e la cultura* (Youth Centre for Art and Culture) was set up.⁷ This building had been handed over to the organisation totally destroyed by vandalism, but has been completely rebuilt with support from the Ministry of the Interior.

The state's financing of the rebuilding has great symbolic value: the state can take possession of wealth accumulated by organised crime over time and can then make use of this by restoring it to the population for use in the service of public welfare.

The rebuilding did not, however, allow for knocking down the high perimeter wall that had altered the urban fabric and street layout of the town. The purpose of this separating wall had been to hide whatever happened within the residence from the sight of local people: it created a sort of 'fortified enclave' (Caldeira 2000, 213), which promoted the importance of the private world by rejecting all dialogue with the town and its social norms.

In Casapesenna, ideas about public space have not conformed to the contemporary ideals of community and universality: the high perimeter walls of the houses encourage separation and isolation, and foster the idea that each social group should live in homogeneous enclaves, isolating

those who are seen as different. Moreover, the forbidding height of these walls immediately evokes the idea of an obstacle:

Once walls are built, they alter public life. The changes we are seeing in the urban environment are fundamentally undemocratic. What is being reproduced at the level of the built environment is segregation and intolerance. The space of these cities is the main arena in which these antidemocratic tendencies are articulated. [...] Cities of walls do not strengthen citizenship but rather contribute to its corrosion. (Caldeira 2000, 334)

Street art was identified as one way of knocking the walls down, metaphorically at least. In this way, what had once been divided, isolated and uncommunicating now manages to attract the attention of the thousands of people who visit or pass by the property that was confiscated from the Camorra. By using a private property as a surface that can communicate, the artists have been creating what Iveson has called ‘a city in common’ (2010, 31).

Thanks to the University of Campania ‘Luigi Vanvitelli’ and the organisation Agrorinascita (‘Agenzia per l’innovazione, lo sviluppo e la sicurezza del territorio’), and with my own involvement, the function of the walls has been completely subverted: they no longer promote division, but instead project welcome and openness to all those whose ideas about living embrace legality and the desire for regeneration.⁸ This is the first time that Italy has seen a collaborative juxtaposition of murals by these two artists: there is a harmonious fusion of Alberonero’s use of colour and abstract geometry with Giò Pistone’s fantastical figures (Figs. 7 and 8).⁹ The walls have changed their form and purpose, as discussed, and at the same time the location has been given a new identity suitable for a centre for art and culture, becoming a source of inspiration for the children, young people and adults who attend it. Alberonero and Pistone have brought their very different styles together in order to achieve a shared objective: transformation of a space in decay, and the attribution of new meanings to this space. Pistone’s aggressive-looking caterpillar sheds



Figure 7. Alberonero and Giò Pistone for Casapesenna, Caserta, work in progress. Photo: Francesco Rinaldi



Figure 8. The courtyard of the building confiscated from the clan boss Venosa for work by Alberonero and Giò Pistone. Photo: Francesco Rinaldi

its skin to free a wonderful butterfly, which flies towards Alberonero's coloured squares: expressing the passage from darkness to light and from decay to beauty, this site-specific work has become a symbol of hope and energy. It is an entreaty not to give in when faced with adversity but to go forward, overcoming obstacles that might seem insurmountable; just as the butterfly leaves the imprisonment of the caterpillar behind it to head for a world of colours, the people of Casapesenna must distance themselves from the horrors of the Camorra and the ravages of the past in order to create a new future rich in hope.

The completion of the murals was followed by numerous activities undertaken with every type of school in the area in order to involve the younger generations, in the knowledge that for the area to undergo social and economic change it needed to experience cultural processes that related to active citizenship. Twelve art and culture workshops were held between October 2015 and March 2016, with more than 6,500 participants.

This project thus had its starting point in recognition of the centrality of art and active participation to the development of culture and the behaviour of the population, and has seen the younger generations as the key target in the attempt to establish a new moral, civil and cultural awareness built around a revived sense of belonging, solidarity and sharing.

In order to understand and research the impact of the project, video interviews were set up during each workshop; aimed principally at the young people in the area's schools, they were intended to assess how effective the methods chosen had been in launching a process of change that was above all moral, and whose results might only be seen with the passage of time.

The interview content demonstrated an extraordinary degree of awareness in relation to the problems linked to organised crime: from the murders, to illegal construction work, to the problem of burying toxic waste. Moreover, this awareness found expression in the children's pictures. One boy, on a beautiful sunny day, drew a landscape under heavy rain; when asked to explain his choice, he replied that only with rain can healthy plants grow, and the land can be freed from toxic waste.¹⁰ Similarly, a young girl drew two vast hands that she said belonged to God, who would help honest people to defeat the Camorra.¹¹

The key word most used by the young people interviewed was ‘speranza’ (hope): while well aware of the social drama that the area was experiencing, none of them had lost hope for a future free from the yoke of organised crime. At the same time, the adults who were often alongside their children during the workshops frequently expressed their enthusiasm for the project under way. ‘My son wants to be here all the time because he says that everything is beautiful and colourful,’ one woman said.¹² This statement particularly demonstrated how projects like this, in environments of urban and social decay, can play a role of primary importance in the development of the sort of civic awareness that can surmount entrenched expectations about the dominance of organised crime.

Intervention methodology and the goals achieved

Involvement and participation have been the two key concepts and principles around which all the urban and social regeneration initiatives discussed in this article have been structured (Figs. 9–16).



Figure 9. Jorit AGOch with the children of Parco Merola, Ponticelli, Naples. Photo: Inward



Figure 10. ZED1 with the children of Parco Merola, Ponticelli, Naples. Photo: Inward



Figure 11. Mattia Campo Dall'Orto involves the children of Parco Merola in the making of his mural. Photo: Inward

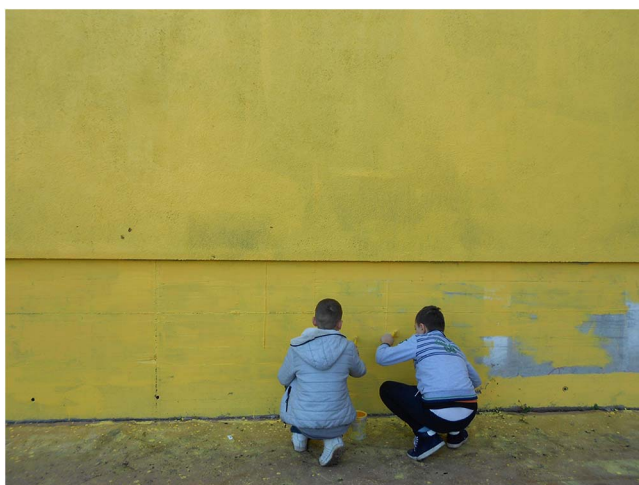


Figure 12. The children of Parco Merona, Ponticelli, at work on the mural *Lo trattenimento de' peccerille* by Mattia Campo Dall'Orto. Photo: Inward

Over and above the obvious aesthetic value of these operations, the impetus to pursue this approach has come from the desire to have a real impact on an urban and social fabric that is not accustomed to artistic practice, or to beauty in general.

In the context of the increasingly general impotence of the law, teaching people about beauty means educating them in legality: teaching young people to respect and defend the landscape of the city and its outskirts. This concept of aesthetic value has allowed people to regard every experience as potentially aesthetic, and avoids restricting beauty to some other sphere connected to the world of contemporary art or art in general. Moreover, this methodology conforms to the



Figure 13. Artistic/educational workshop in the courtyard of the building confiscated from the clan boss Venosa, Casapesenna, Caserta. Photos: Alessandro Santulli



Figure 14. Artistic/educational workshop in the courtyard of the building confiscated from the clan boss Venosa, Casapesenna, Caserta. Photos: Alessandro Santulli

argument made in the 1930s by John Dewey, to the effect that every experience that is truly complete has within it an aesthetic element (1934).

In the areas discussed, the artists have created not only works of art but also, and I would argue especially, an active public: attention has been shifted away from art practice linked to the concept of abstraction, and towards aesthetic experiences in which the dominant idea is activation of the audience. In this form of practice, a product-centred approach to art gives way to a model of open-ended collaboration that is characterised by great freedom of action and the mass involvement of



Figure 15. Artistic/educational workshop in the courtyard of the building confiscated from the clan boss Venosa, Casapesenna, Caserta. Photos: Alessandro Santulli

actors who often have little to do with the dynamics of formal art as it is often understood. If we start with this perspective, the citizen is at the centre of a virtuous circle that links artistic production almost inseparably to democratic participation. As we have seen, the centrality of the public in the construction of the aesthetic process has generated initiatives whose ambience does not relate exclusively to their being works of art, but is provided directly by the public, which participated in their creation and benefits from them on a daily basis.

If we move on from these premises, it is my belief that street art initiatives like these have at least as great an impact on the public sphere as they do on public space. This idea is closely linked to the active participation of the individual in the public and social life of the city. The interaction between the individual and the artist, but also between individuals, together with the aesthetic response to the art initiatives, helps to imbue public space with the civic values that help to lay the foundations for 'that feeling of belonging that links individuals to places' (Montebelli 2000, 5). The introduction of works of art into public space, when carefully researched and considered as in the cases presented, has thus activated virtuous processes with a range of capacities:

- development of a strong sense of community;
- development of civic identity;
- addressing the needs of the society in a poetic manner;
- countering social exclusion;
- development of the values of education;
- promotion of social change.



Figure 16. Artistic/educational workshop in the courtyard of the building confiscated from the clan boss Venosa, Casapesenna, Caserta. Photos: Alessandro Santulli

In what way, however, can creativity and aesthetics strengthen the moral values of a community? Once again, the answer is to be found in the concept of involvement: involving a community does not only mean listening to, interpreting and sharing its ideals, but also creating fertile ground for the growth of initiatives that start from below and have the capacity to make positive inroads at all social levels (Jacobs 1961). Involvement means participation: this brings us to the concept of ‘new genre public art’, conceptualised in the early 1990s by Suzanne Lacy (1994).¹³ This encouraged the rise of new methodologies for the planning and realisation of authentic aesthetic experiences:

Art thus addresses public space, making it a favoured location for trying out and seeking new aesthetic methodologies; in public space, unlike in exhibitions in official locations such as museums and galleries, there prevails a sense of the shared creation of experiences and the shared enjoyment of the artistic output. Artists carefully study the ways in which the everyday reality of those living and working in a specific place reveals itself, examine its detail, and rework this in order to make their contribution to the space in a decisive and constructive manner. (Palermo 2014, 19–20)

In the cases considered here, there has been a shift in sense and meaning, which no longer derives from bringing art to the people but instead from working with people to create an art that not only has a significant aesthetic impact but also, and above all, relates to how people might lead their lives. As a result, the achievements of these urban art initiatives can be summarised as follows:

- revitalisation of the urban and social environment through the regeneration of quarters on the city’s outskirts and of buildings confiscated from organised crime;
- re-establishment and strengthening of the social fabric through practices of active citizenship;

- encouragement for the residents to seek and share their own collective identity with a view towards a better future;
- involvement of local people, stimulating and developing their specific skills and talents;
- reduction of the incidence, impact and fear of organised crime.

Why might street art, in particular, be a vehicle for fighting crime and widespread illegality? Urban artists have the capacity to create a cultural space in the urban environment which otherwise could never have existed. Working for the city, and in direct physical contact with its fabric, street artists develop a particular relationship with urban space: ‘they forge a very physical and intimate negotiation with space by altering it’ (Lewisohn 2008, 93). In this way, the city’s residents can reappropriate urban space and resume being actors within it, since use, according to Lefebvre, ‘implies not “property” but “appropriation”’ (1991, 356). Street art is thus a way of appropriating the local area and creating a sense of belonging to it. To develop the argument further, this type of art initiative in public space can be seen as having great symbolic potency; the walls and buildings can be seen as a place of experimentation and a testing ground for creative thinking. As Cedar Lewisohn has said, ‘street art is often reflective of the place’ (2008, 63).

Conclusion

I would argue that street art best expresses its potential when its form emerges from a process of reflection and it is enlisted for subversion of the collective imaginary previously imposed: unlike other visual arts, street art speaks to the public in a way that cuts across any differences of a political, sexual, economic or cultural nature. It plays a role of primary importance, with increasing energy, in determining the way in which we look at the world and the place that all of us can and should occupy within this.

As I have emphasised, the methodologies of intervention discussed in this article have been shaped by starting from a participatory approach, in order to foster the development of processes of social inclusion. This critical centre, consisting of relationships and creative participation, favours the ‘public sphere’ (Habermas 1989) within the range of artistic expression. Around it can be constructed the ‘new image of the city’ that is open to the gift of hospitality, as discussed by Derrida (2000); this is very different to the closed nature typical of the recent and not so recent tribalisms, and is impervious to the fear of social interpenetration that the sociologist Bauman has termed ‘mixophobia’ (2003).

Street art, like other forms of participatory art, has the potential to play an active part in constructing social reality by promoting the ‘aestheticisation of urban chaos’ (Özkan 2011).

The initiatives described in this article have had the merit of reigniting the population’s interest in the issue of illegality and organised crime, and launching processes of regeneration of urban spaces that have been under the control of the Camorra for too long. Moreover, these initiatives have encouraged the attribution of new meanings to places and the redetermination of their function. Street art moves forward by means of reflection on ‘oppositions such as “lack of communication” vs. “dialogue”, “isolation” vs. “communication”, “euphoria” vs. “dysphoria”, “life” vs. “death”, “continuity” vs. “discontinuity”, etc.’ (Stano 2013, 194).

By using the space as a field of action, interaction and communication, street art redefines the relationship between places and individuals and creates alternative spaces in the fabric of the city and its outskirts, especially in environments like those examined here.¹⁴ The art initiatives discussed have demonstrated the desire of people living and working in these areas to combat organised crime with cultural projects that aim to awaken the awareness of the local population and create opportunities for social and economic development. However, there has not yet been

the chance to undertake impact studies that might provide an empirical justification of the methods in use; this relates primarily to the lack of financial resources that Italian universities have long endured, but also to the absence of earlier studies anywhere in Italy on this topic. The interviews and investigations undertaken in Casapesenna have therefore broken new ground, within Italy, in measuring the impact of street art; because of the lack of funding available, they have been taken forward not by sociologists or psychologists but by art historians.

*Translated by Stuart Oglethorpe
(stuart.oglethorpe@gmail.com)*

Notes on contributor

Luca Palermo is a post-doctoral Research Fellow in the History of Contemporary Art at the Department of Humanities and Cultural Heritage, University of Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli'.

His publications include articles for *Art History Supplement* and *Il capitale culturale*, book chapters, and the books *Public art nelle università. Storia, esperienze a confronto e metodologie di valorizzazione* (Rome: Aracne, 2014), *Maschera-mente/o. La Livio Marino e Antonio Tagliaferro S.R.L.* (Capua: Artetetra, 2016) and, most recently, *Caserta '70. Movimenti artistici in Terra di Lavoro* (Caserta: Terre Blu, 2017). His current research is in the area of the methodology of art history and the history of criticism, with a particular focus on contemporary art history.

Notes

1. The speech by Borsellino is often quoted, for example by Costabile (2015, 25), sometimes in an edited version. A recording is available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRG7KXSMD5A>
2. I am referring, in particular, to Brian O'Doherty's concept of the 'white cube' (1986).
3. For more information about Jorith AGOch as an artist, see <http://www.jorit.it/index-1.html>, accessed 6 February 2017.
4. For further information on Mattia Campo Dall'Orto as an artist, see <http://www.mattiacampodallorto.it>, accessed 6 February 2017.
5. For further information about Orticanoodles as an artist, see <http://www.orticanoodles.com>.
6. Moreover, the work was undertaken using a particular paint called 'Airlite', a totally natural product whose behaviour is very similar to that of plants experiencing photosynthesis using chlorophyll: through the energy of light, the concentration of nitrous oxide particles present in the air is reduced. For the mural of about 80 square metres, using this paint had the same effect as planting a similar surface area of forest trees in the same zone.
7. The expression 'Terra dei Fuochi' was coined in the 2000s to indicate 'a vast area between the provinces of Naples and Caserta which has had particular prominence in the media due to the burial of toxic waste and the outbreak of numerous waste fires, with a significant impact on the health of the local population' (Bencivelli 2016, 29).
8. Agrorinascce is a cooperative body comprising the local councils of San Cipriano d'Aversa, Casal di Principe, Casapesenna, San Marcellino, Santa Maria la Fossa and Villaliterno. It was created to boost respect for the law within an area with a high crime rate. For further information on this body and its initiatives, see <http://www.agrorinascce.org>, accessed 7 February 2017.
9. For further information about these two artists and their work, see <http://www.alberonero.it>, accessed 7 February 2017; <http://giopistone.it>, accessed 7 February 2017.
10. Video interview with a pupil from the Istituto Autonomo Comprensivo Don Milani/Gravante of Grazzanise/Santa Maria La Fossa, Casapesenna, 4 December 2015.
11. Video interview with a pupil from the Istituto Comprensivo Leonardo Da Vinci of San Marcellino, Casapesenna, 9 December 2015.
12. Video interview with a mother, Casapesenna, 22 January 2015.

13. The literature on this topic is extensive. The methodological approach taken to the examples of street art discussed in this article has been informed by a range of authors who have offered new guidance on studying this area. These include, among many others, Lacy (1994, 2010); Deutsche (1996); Finkelpearl (2000); Kwon (2002); Kester (2004); Doherty (2004); Hein (2006); Cartiere and Willis (2008).
14. For further discussion of this issue see Chaffee (1993); Dickens (2008); Tsilimpounidi (2012).

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Italian summary

Cercare di porre un freno all'incessante dilagare della criminalità organizzata nel meridione d'Italia non deve essere una questione riguardante solo giudici, magistrati e forze dell'ordine; ogni cittadino dovrebbe sentirsi parte integrante di un vento di cambiamento che, partendo dal basso, possa incidere in maniera determinata sul cambiamento sociale. Partendo da tali presupposti, l'arte e la cultura, in un'ottica partecipativa e di coinvolgimento, possono giocare un ruolo di primaria importanza in questi processi di rinnovamento. In varie aree delle province di Napoli e Caserta si è andati ad intervenire, attraverso ben studiati lavori di street art e con la diretta partecipazione della gente comune, in contesti degradati e marginali nei quali la presenza delle criminalità organizzata sembrava essere così radicata da non poter essere estirpata. Il saggio in questione presenterà tali casi di studio, analizzandone le premesse, le metodologie e gli obiettivi.