Making it Big: Street Art Muralism in a Post-Political World

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Abstract

Making it Big: Street Art Muralism in a Post Political World

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Making it Big is an ethnographic exploration of the critical role that graffiti and street artists can play in resisting neoliberal attempts to pacify radical modes of artistic practice in North American cities today. Over the last decade, street art muralism has increasingly been identified as a key component in reshaping urban infrastructures and economies, namely though the development of arts districts and the organization of urban or mural arts festivals. It has also been mobilized to confront social injustices and raise public awareness to environmental and global issues. Influenced by graffiti and street art, street art muralism is argued as being a distinct form of public art, heroic to monumental in scale, and produced in public settings with consent. The shift towards professional and institutionally managed street art mural projects and programs demands a closer and critical evaluation of equality and content in place and space, and the democratization of arts in the city. As commercial and government interests grow urban arts infrastructures using street art mural-based tourism strategies, they are met with either support or resistance from *purists and muralists* in the graffiti and street art communities. On the one hand, *purists* argue that the street art muralism threatens to supplant graffiti culture and informal systems of aesthetic regulation. On the other hand, *muralists* see opportunities to develop their public and professional arts careers and use their art to raise awareness to environmental, cultural, political, and social justice issues. Social relations which have emerged from new configurations of work and art have also produced new subjectivities, perspectives, and worldviews which can help to expand rather than detract from counter-hegemonic struggles. This research will show how graffiti and street artists and the multiplicity of social spaces where they find themselves working have contributed to an expansion of the field of artistic intervention. As such, this research probes the struggles and tensions produced by these new and changing social relations and spatial forms surrounding their professionalization and the popularization through street art muralism to draw out the contradictions between these commercial and emancipatory projects.

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Making it Big: Street Art Muralism in a Post Political World

Making it Big is an ethnographic exploration of the ways in which graffiti and street art have been integrated into the development of urban arts infrastructures and creative industries in North American cities. It is also about the critical role that artists can play in subverting and resisting neoliberal attempts to pacify radical modes of artistic practice. While the professionalization of graffiti and street art is not a new phenomenon, their integration into public, festival oriented, profitable, urban arts projects over the last decade demands a closer and critical examination of equality and content in place and space, and the democratization of arts in the city. Even if culture has largely become a new source of profit, post-Fordist modes of labor are characterized by a fluidity of specializations, hybridized work spaces and roles, immateriality and performativity which allow for deeper intellectual reflection and new configurations of work and art (Virno 2004). As Mouffe (2013) has posited, the commodification of culture, does not preclude the critical role that the arts can play in neoliberal societies. The social relations which emerge from these new arrangements also produce new subjectivities, perspectives, and worldviews which can help to expand rather than detract from counter-hegemonic struggles. The realignment of work and art has broadened the types of career paths available to artists which were only previously regarded as unlawful. The professionalization and popularization of street art muralism have also produced new struggles and tensions which inform both commercial and emancipatory projects. This research will show how the artists that I have followed over the course of the last decade and the multiplicity of social spaces where they find themselves working have contributed to an expansion of the fields of artistic intervention and careers.

Over the last decade, street art muralism has increasingly been identified as a key component in the reshaping of urban infrastructures and economies, helping to make cities more attractive, diverse, tolerant, and entertaining (Koster & Randall 2005, Barnes et al 2006, Rantisi & Leslie 2006, Maria de Miguel et al 2013, Ulldemolins 2014, Jazdzewska 2017). Although heavily influenced by the aesthetics and practices of graffiti and street art, street art muralism is a distinct form of public art, characterised as heroic to monumental in scale, produced in public settings with the consent of municipal governments and property owners, typically themed along pictorial, figurative, abstract, or semi-abstract content. In a short time span, street art muralism has quickly risen to become the dominant form of urban visual art seen in cities today. This has been facilitated by the support and funding by municipal agencies

namely though the development of arts districts and the organization of urban or mural arts festivals. The arts districts, festivals, events, and murals that are produced through these projects are characterised as beautifying city space, boosting local commerce, and enhancing tourism experiences.

As municipalities progressively move towards street art mural-based tourism strategies while regulating graffiti as part of their growing urban arts infrastructures, they are met with either support or resistance from graffiti writers, artists, and other stakeholders in the subculture. Oppositional or supportive attitudes among those in the graffiti and street art communities can be described as being either *purist* or *muralist* in orientation. On the one hand, graffiti *purists*, who adhere to traditional values and practices of graffiti, argue that the street art muralism threatens to supplant graffiti culture and informal systems of aesthetic regulation. On the other hand, graffiti and street art *muralists,* see this as an opportunity to develop and grow their public and professional arts careers. Additionally, there are graffiti and street art muralists who are committed to using their art to raise awareness to environmental, cultural, political, and social justice issues. Being able to pursue and grow a professional arts career while engaging with these issues is a source of tension for some artists who find themselves often having to make choices between them. How purists and muralists position themselves within creative city discourses and how they manifest their support or resistance to municipal and corporate strategies to professionalize and commoditize streets-based arts is the central interest of this research.

There are two major projects to which street art muralism is being mobilized today. In the first project, street art muralism is being organized as an alternative beautification strategy to improve the quality of life of inner city neighborhoods, enhance existing tourism programs, boost local commerce, and encourage new creative industries. A function of what Ferrell (1999) has termed an *aesthetics of authority,* local interests work together to reduce or remove offensive elements such as unwanted graffiti or street art, vagrants and the homeless, skateboarders, and any other undesirable elements or persons through a combination of bylaws and active policing. Framed here as a component of *formal systems of aesthetic regulation and management*, street art muralism is refashioned as an *economic magnetizer* and an *aesthetic regenerator* of inner-city neighborhoods, commercial and post-industrial areas. The success of these types of projects are measured quantitatively in terms of profits associated with commerce, the rise in property values, and the reduction of crime.

Historically government intervention and management of the mural arts has been accomplished through a series of bureaucratic

and regulatory constraints at the federal and state/provincial levels. Public mural arts projects were first implemented by federal programs after the Revolution in Mexico in the early 1920s and the Great Depression in the United States in the 1930s. In the 1960s North American public mural arts projects were mostly produced at the community level so they fell under state and municipal management with limited corporate sponsorships and interventions. By the 1980s there were few public mural arts programs in North America, however, the cities of Chemainus, British Columbia and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania both established their own unique programs to beautify city space, and boost local economies. Chemainus adopted a mural-based tourism strategy to reinvigorate local commerce while Philadelphia instituted an expansive mural arts program to help manage the spread of graffiti but also to improve community and youth outreach in the city. Smaller in scope, the Chemainus program has only produced 50 murals since it was founded and has focused on traditional themes that incorporate local culture and history. The Philadelphia program has grown to be much larger (over 4000 murals to-date) and includes traditional forms of muralism as well as those that are based in graffiti and street art. It is also the most funded and successful of the mural arts programs in the United States. Over the last decade formal systems of aesthetic regulation and management have increasingly been directed towards the development of urban branding projects and economies of muralism in cities across North America.

Repackaged as creative industries, street art mural projects have been re-organized as immersive experiences where passive public audiences consume art within the larger context of spectacle entertainment. Through a combination of constraints and interventions (regulations, sponsorships, donations, associations, and partnerships), municipal governments and private interest groups (Business Improvement Districts, Areas, and Sociétés Développements as they are known in Quebec) have taken an active role in shaping the progress and direction of street art muralism. On the one hand, municipalities regulate wall painting and use prevention programs to direct the illicit efforts of young graffiti writers and street artists towards more professional outcomes and so-called creative work. On the other hand, businesses and private investors are interested in tapping into the creative potential and aesthetics that street art muralism offers for commercial revenues and raising the value of existing inner-city properties and districts. In the process relations between stakeholders become increasingly instrumentalized and money-oriented rather than community based.

The second major project that street art muralism is being mobilized towards is the confrontation of social injustices and raising of public awareness to environmental and global issues. This

project aims to harness the creative potential of street art muralism to rupture normative attitudes and behaviors, offering alternative visions and voices to mainstream media and politics. In this sense, street art muralism could be understood as an *act of citizenship* and being part of activist schemes to expand and inform public perception. Upon closer inspection, however, it will be shown that activist street art mural projects are less acts of citizenship and more what could be termed critical artistic practices. The heroic and monumental works of street art that are reviewed in this dissertation are meant to offer alternative narratives to the status quo and give voice to the voiceless by helping to visualize claims to rights, dignity, and recognition of marginalized groups rather than rupture established laws or practices. These activist street art projects also struggle with contingencies and contradictions emerging from the culture and politics of neoliberal hegemony which they aim to confront and critique.

Within the culture of neoliberalism a communicative rational link between morality and politics has emerged that often leads to the dangerous conflation of the two. This is partially the result of an increasingly divisive political terrain that has spread across much of Europe and North America that frames oppositional attitudes and opinions to the status quo as being morally corrupt. Throughout this work, the political will be understood as an ontological orientation involving spaces of "power, conflict and antagonism" where people have to make choices between alternatives that are often inconsistent and conflicting. (Mouffe 2005: 154, see also 2013). The neoliberal rejection of adversarial or antagonistic positions and voices rooted in collective identities has reduced, and in some cases removed, symbolic spaces for conflicts to be resolved or occur at all (Tally 2007). Neoliberal efforts to manage and commodify graffiti and street art are a manifestation of this attitude of rejection which has led to the diminishing role that these artistic practices have played in contributing to the creative confrontation and critique of the status quo in public spaces.

In the context of neoliberal hegemony then, street art muralism is understood as an in*formal system of moral qualification*, a *magnetizer and regenerator of collective or public discourse*. Moreover, neoliberal culture has largely instrumentalized artistic motivations, encouraging the pursuit of professional careers over any commitment to collective political projects and identities. This is a shift from the political artistic projects of the 20th century when artists utilized the mural arts to engage with collective struggles and to challenge the status quo. The civil rights era of the 1960s and 1970s introduced more localised strategies of political artistic interventions such as community muralism, graffiti, and street art. It is the co-option of these more radically oriented forms of artistic

political intervention under neoliberal hegemony that has led to the emergence and popularization of street art muralism today. To be clear, this is not an argument that street art muralism is an ineffective platform to produce meaningful and engaging artistic interventions which challenge and critique the status quo. Neither is it an argument that street artists are incapable of playing a critical role in social and political struggles because of this co-option. Rather, it is the intention of this work to show how graffiti and street artists are working to develop repertoires of practice and knowledge though creative, inventive, and critical artistic interventions. Issues surrounding autonomy with respect to the sponsorships, partnerships and the management of socially engaged street art will also be addressed. This includes the tensions which arise between competing attitudes among artists, organizers, and other stakeholders as they navigate the often difficult logistical, operational, budgetary, and ethical realities of these projects.

Although these two projects differ greatly, they are not mutually exclusive. Beautification or revitalization projects can also, and often do, bring attention to neglected urban areas and the living conditions of poor inner city neighborhoods. As well, festivals and events may not necessarily revolve around issues of political, social or environmental justice, or cultural/historical preservation but artists may paint street art murals along these themes to promote causes or raise awareness of these issues. At the same time, urban arts festivals are increasingly oriented towards commercial and consumer outcomes with improvement monies being funnelled through BIAs, BIDs, and SDs ostensibly to beautify inner city neighborhoods but also to make urban space more conducive or amendable to commercial applications and possibilities. There are also the continued efforts of local graffiti purists and muralists who remain committed to preserving the traditions and culture which revolve around differing aesthetics and attitudes to urban space than those of street art muralists. These efforts can manifest as claims to space through attempts to secure walls with property owners by way of permission, contracts, or through acts of vandalism. This has created new tensions between practitioners of graffiti and street art, municipal prevention programs, property and business owners, and festival organizers as each group attempts to either preserve existent claims to space or make new ones. Urban and mural arts festivals then are valuable sites to investigate how these two projects are unfolding and how artists situate themselves either as contributors and supporters or critics and detractors.

At the most general level, this research project asks: *what is street art muralism and the social relations that surround its production and consumption?* In order to effectively answer this question it is necessary to break down street art muralism into its

constitutive components: *muralism, graffiti and street art.* By doing so it will be shown how these artistic practices are connected historically and the tensions and struggles that artists have endured have informed their motivations for pursuing muralism publicly and professionally. The first two chapters then, will be dedicated to unpacking the historical, cultural, and socio-political underpinnings of muralism, graffiti, and street art. The first chapter looks at the work of the early North American muralists in Mexico and the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, highlighting the struggles that artists endured to create meaningful social and political change through mural arts projects. The second chapter focuses on the emergence of graffiti and street art in the 1960s –70s and the rise of monumental street art muralism as the dominant form public artistic expression in cities today. Following this, the third chapter looks at how street art muralism is being refashioned as a regenerating and magnetizing force in urban settings through festivals and specialized programs that ostensibly promote it as a public art. Festivals and specialized programs which uplift street art muralism as the choice visual form of expression in cities tend to exclude other streets-based arts such as graffiti which creates tensions between community members. This chapter will examine the contradictions surrounding the urban commons and the right to the city which have emerged from economies of muralism and how purists and muralists are either resisting or supporting these developments. The final chapter focuses on how socially engaged muralism is being mobilized towards activist projects confronting social injustices and raising of public awareness to global issues.

Methodological Approach

This is an ethnographic research project which revolves around several methods: archival research, photographic documentation, formal interviews, and participant observation. Formal interviews were conducted with graffiti and street artists as well as several organisers of urban and mural arts festivals primarily in the cities of Montreal, Quebec and Miami, Florida. These two cities feature predominantly as they were my main areas of field work, however, I also conducted limited field work in Germany, Vienna, Lisbon, and several smaller townships in Quebec and Ontario. I have tried to incorporate any findings from these occasions into this work where possible. Additionally there were numerous informal discussions and interviews held with other related community stakeholders at festivals, art shows, expositions, jams and other smaller local events. Contacts for interviews were built from those that I have established during my extensive documentation and study of the graffiti subculture in Montreal and abroad. Being in contact with several writers and artists already made the process of establishing possible

connections much easier. Other interviews were generated through festival and event participation. The total number of interviews for this research was 24: 19 artists (18 male and 1 female), 5 organizers (3 male and 2 female). Participant observation and photographic documetnation at events and festivals also provided invaluable observations and experiences which added greatly to my analysis and discussion.

Much of my methods have been developed over the last 18 years working with graffiti and street artists. I began documenting graffiti in Montreal in late 2003 to provide context for my undergraduate work. This developed into a focused research project in 2006 for my master's degree. Working with graffiti writers for nearly 20 years you would think that I have gained incredible insights into their family and life histories, but the truth is I have intentionally left their personal lives vague, focusing more on their doing of graffiti than anything else. Of the writers I have developed closer friendships with and who have shared more personal information with me over the years either declined to be in this study or those details did not have relevance to my focused inquiry. When I first started interviewing graffiti writers in 2006-07 I was a complete outsider and it took considerable time and efforts to convince my participants that I was not working for or with any law enforcement agencies. Many thought that I was a police officer or what is commonly called a *narc* in street talk, that is, an informant for the police. I used my camera and the documentation of graffiti as a means to get closer to the wall with these writers and artists, showing them my dedication to documenting their illicit and legitimate works of graffiti and muralism. It took the better part of four years to gain the trust of a handful of graffiti writers and artists. During this time I kept an active and updated blog showcasing their work, and spent countless hours following their activities on the streets to get to that level confidence. I did not ask about intimate details of family life and only pursued such personal matter if they were open to discussing it. Graffiti writers are incredibly secretive, mostly because what they do is illegal and many have had run ins with the police, been arrested for doing graffiti, even did some jail time or paid heavy fines. Some are still dealing with these consequences in one form or another, even years after having done any illicit writing. Many graffiti writers still remain guarded, sharing little personal information with me in fear of discovery by the authorities or because they are uncomfortable discussing it. I still do not even know many of their given names, having them sign my release forms with their graffiti names in case of any repercussions.

After completing my masters I continued working with writers and artists, getting more deeply involved, going on missions (documenting writers doing graffiti), documenting productions and

murals (photography and video) and even so-called *spraycations* (travel to another country to do/document graffiti and connect with the local subculture there). I fell in deep and made good friends with some writers in Montreal and abroad, a number of who I still stay in touch with. After this long in the subculture I am now considered to be an unofficial member of several crews, writers give me shout outs in their pieces, I have publically represented writers, artists, and the subculture in local news and several documentaries, besides my academic work. In short I am a trusted documenter and spokesperson of the sorts for the subculture. At times I have been privy to the more intimate details of their lives, and where possible I have provided deeper description. Still, part of why I have attained this respect is because of this discretion about their lives outside of graffiti and street art. Even as close as I have become with these writers and artists it just became the norm not to pry too much, and most of our attention in interviews or discussions were focused on the subculture, art, and doing graffiti, as well as interrelations and politics between writers and artists. I keep it specific to the subculture, impersonal yet intimate in terms of the practice, I reveal much in my photography yet obscure some of the finer details.

Another important detail with concern to graffiti writers and street artists is that street artists and muralists as well as the organisers for street art mural events tend to be more open to discussing life or family histories and backgrounds with me. This is likely because they are publicly oriented and pursue legitimate and legal channels for art and career so they are less concerned about any legal consequences of divulging too much information. As such, the personal or family information regarding some of these street artists might be more detailed than the graffiti writers and artists in this study. Again, where possible, such as in chapters 2 and 3, I have done my best to provide ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and educational background information on graffiti writers and artists on a more general level. Where possible, such as with Fluke, Axe, and Awe, I have provided more specifics regarding their motivations and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. In chapter 4 where I focus on the career paths and trajectories of two street artists, Kevin Ledo and Jason Botkin, these details are more in depth as they were much more open and willing to share these details in relation to their work.

Interviews were loosely structured and focused on work related relations, conditions and experiences of the artists and organisers at urban arts and mural festivals as well as permission and commission mural projects. Conducting my interviews in this fashion allowed me to build rapport and gave room for my respondents to get more comfortable about sharing their experiences, perspectives and opinions about graffiti and street art muralism as well as the festivals in which they participated. The use of photo-elicitation techniques

was used to draw out information from interviewees bust also to build a visual competency of graffiti and street art muralism. The basic premise of this method is to enter into a collaborative relationship with the subject and to make the interview into a learning experience for both parties (Chiozzi 1989, Collier and Collier 1986, Harper 2012). These images helped with conducting the flow of the interviews and provided a common point of focus for both myself and the participants. I also wanted to gauge their attitudes to the rising popularity of street art muralism and where appropriate discuss their experiences having been involved in such mural projects. As well, these interviews gave me the opportunity to discuss how their motivations and aspirations have come to inform their emerging roles, and how they are grappling with the concept of being a public artist more generally. Interviews with municipal and event organizers, property owners, and business development representatives were more formal, focusing on aspects of event organization, funding and partnerships, criteria for artist selection, venue considerations, and any tensions or pressures they experienced vis-à-vis other mural painters, or with graffiti writers. Finally, I wanted to know what role they saw themselves serving as community members in this process, and that of muralism as a public art more generally given the changing economic and cultural landscape in the city.

Interviews were similarly structured but depending on the type of artist or organiser (e.g. graffiti or street artist, street art muralist, informal or formal event coordinator or project manager) the line of questioning or topic of discussion would vary. Generally, graffiti artists were focused more on their suspicions and grievances with mural arts programs that uplift street art muralism over graffiti and the lack of representation for the graffiti writing subculture at the institutional level (besides their general disdain for the lack of street cred(ibility) of street artists). Street artists and muralists were the complete opposite and mostly voiced their disdain for antagonistic graffiti writers and the perceived lack of respect from writers in the subculture more generally.

Documentation of graffiti, street art, and murals incorporating these artistic styles, was conducted either passively (static photography at the street level) or actively (photography of artists as they painted at events and festivals). Photography and my camera were important gatekeeping tools which allowed me to gain closer access to my participants and their work. Where appropriate, photographs of graffiti, street art, and muralism will be used to exemplify these artistic practices and provide a visual component to the discussion. Participant observation was carried out namely at urban or mural arts festivals which I had volunteered for as a photographer or when I had worked out an agreement with the artists

to document their work for payment and/or for the opportunity to observe their working environments. Overall I have spent a great deal of time with the participant artists in this work and have been a constant presence in the local graffiti subculture and arts community in Montreal for more than a decade. My research has benefitted immensely from these rich periods of participant observation allowing for deeper insights regarding the nature, composition, and quality of the social relations surrounding graffiti, street art, and muralism in Montreal, Miami, and abroad.

This research focuses on Montreal and Miami, however, the discussions and implications which surround the development of street art muralism as a public art can also be applied to other North American cities. Montreal occupies a unique position in North American graffiti subculture both for its geographical location and its and its distinctive political and cultural characteristics. Montreal's proximity to the New York and Miami arts scenes as well as its popularity with European tourism and immigration has helped to create a dynamic and vibrant arts culture unlike anywhere else in North America. Montreal also has one of the longest running graffiti art festivals, Under Pressure (since 1996), and was one of the first Canadian cities to produce a street art mural festival (Mural Festival 2013). Although Montreal shares a deep history with New York City in terms of graffiti culture, it is Miami Florida that has had the most influence on the direction that artists and municipalities have taken in the growth of economies of muralism, including the urban arts districts and festivals which power them. Montreal's Mural Festival was a direct development from Art Basel in Miami, Florida, the success of which has been reproduced in cities across Canada and into the United States since its inception in 2013. Although Toronto Ontario has a thriving graffiti and arts scene, it has not been as influential as Montreal has been on street art muralism or the economies which surround it, however, mural based tourism strategies are still pursued by a number of Ontarian municipalities which will be discussed to a limited degree. It is the argument of this thesis that the graffiti and street art communities in Montreal have been far more influential in the development of street art muralism namely because of its unique geography and history which have always favored the arts, but also because of its rich cultural diversity and radical political spirit.

As it will be discussed in the opening chapter, Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program is exemplary of community based muralism, however, it was not selected as a site for field work for several reasons. Firstly, as noted, the Montreal graffiti subculture, which includes most of my research participants, has much closer ties historically and culturally to the graffiti scene in New York City. Secondly, Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program did have an influence

on muralism in Montreal, however, there is a stronger connection to Miami, Florida in terms of the growth and spread of urban arts districts and festivals across North America which are central to this research. Lastly, although Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program has expanded to include an urban arts district that incorporates street art muralism, it only did so after the success of other such projects in Miami, Montreal, and other North American cities. For these reasons Philadelphia remained an important part of the history and conversation regarding the evolution of graffiti and street art muralism, however, at the time of this research it was not as relevant or yet to develop economies of muralism such as that seen in Miami or Montreal.

An ethnographic approach best suited this research project as it offered the opportunity to produce a reflexive account of social life that gives priority to the perspectives, attitudes and opinions of the artists, organisers, and related stakeholders of what could loosely be called the contemporary street art mural movement. This approach also gave me access to the narrative structures of the artists and organisers in both the graffiti and street art communities in order to draw out and analyze the discursive similarities, differences and contradictions between stakeholders. It also provided an opportunity to acquire otherwise unobtainable historical details through stories and personal experiences, which, unique to each artist, were also part of a shared culture among those in the graffiti and street art communities.

Festivals and events are important sites for the documentation of street art muralism as they involve many artists, event organizers, and other stakeholders who are most likely to be in attendance. Artists and other art world members like curators and collectors, appreciators and consumers, all congregate at festivals to make connections, meet artists, but also to socialize, see and talk art, plan collaborations, and maybe find some work. Fieldwork at festivals and events then, provides an opportunity to build new contacts and extend networks through informal conversations with artists and community stakeholders.

I offered myself as a volunteer at several of these festivals and events in order to acquire a closer and more intimate position to the organizers and artists. I was a photographer for Mural Festival Montreal from 2016-2017, but had also been documenting the event informally since its start in 2013. I had also been volunteering and documenting for Under Pressure for 16 years from 2003 until 2019, at first as a general helper and later more as a photographer as my knowledge and skill in photography improved. Under Pressure is the largest and longest running annual international Hip Hop and graffiti convention in North America held in Montreal and organized by local members of the subculture. Between 2013 and 2019 I

documented the event through photography and spending time with graffiti writers and artists as they painted their pieces, productions, and murals. Besides these two events I also documented a number of local graffiti jams and events, as well as permission and commission walls in Montreal. When I was not officially documenting festivals and events for organisers, I was conducting my own documentation of graffiti, street art, and muralism both locally and abroad. My close connections with graffiti crews and art collectives in Montreal has also afforded me the opportunity to accompany artists in several cities and locations in Canada and the United States. Moreover, through the documentation of these events and projects it will be revealed how institutional attachment could play a supportive role in the development of new and non-representative forms of self-organization within the arts communities. Whether this institutional support has generated new terrains of hegemonic contestation and helped to transform them into agonistic public spaces will also be examined (Mouffe 2005, 2013).

Photographic fieldwork involved the documentation of mural types to compare in order to draw out the similarities, differences, and contradictions in terms of the style, form, and context. Where possible, I sought out the property owners, artists, and any connected public or private organizations associated with their production to acquire additional qualitative data through interviews or informal discussions. For the most part I looked at only legal and approved graffiti and street art murals by municipalities, prevention programs, mural companies, and art collectives. These were sanctioned permission or commissioned graffiti and street art murals either by municipalities where the properties were located and/or the property owners where murals were to be painted. Not all municipalities demand that property owners and artists present a proposal for graffiti or street art mural work to be carried out, however, where that was necessary this condition was met as well.

Finally, the use of my digital camera (Canon D6) to document and collect data has been used extensively in this research project. It was not only an important data collection device but also acts an ethnographic passport (Marion 2010), or a point of entry, which assisted me in the acquisition of visual data, potential informants, collaborators, and field experiences. Photographs of muralism and street art by my participants also offered them the opportunity to share their knowledge which helped to further educate my untrained eye to certain details or particularities of the street art world. In this way, the circulation and shared analysis of my photo documentation allowed for collaborative moments during my fieldwork, which helped to deepen both my understandings and appreciation of the research material (Pink 2007; 2011). Ultimately the camera put me into closer proximity with my participants which helped

immeasurably in establishing rapport and with expanding my knowledge and appreciation of my object of study.

Theoretical Approach & Research Questions

The broad theoretical framework for this research rests within the intersection of the sociology of subcultures (Hebdige 1979), the artistic intervention of public space and roles of artistic and social critique in post-Fordist societies (Scott 1990, Mouffe 2005, 2014, Boltanski & Chiapello 2005), creative industries and cities (Zukin 1995, Landry 2012, Florida 2014), and the inequalities of urban geography and management (Harvey 1973, 2008, 2012). This research strives to uncover and analyze the unique socio-political relationships that surround street art muralism and how they are changing the ways in which we see cities and relate to them.

Throughout this work public space will be framed as a pluralistic and discursive battlefield where hegemonic projects (individual, collective, and institutional) compete for authority and dominance (Mouffe 2008, 2013). Accordingly, public space is always in conflict and antagonisms between competing hegemonic projects underpin all forms of power relations between individuals and institutions. Mouffe argues that "to think politically is to recognize this ontological dimension of radical negativity" (2013: xi) and to accept that purely objective relations and consensus among all societal members is impossible. This model of democracy that Mouffe calls *agonistic pluralism* diverts sharply from the deliberative ideals of liberal politics. General consensus and universal language cannot resolve every conflict of interest in modern society and every political order, no matter how egalitarian it may be presented, involves some form of exclusion where one group stands to gain more at the expense of another. Although consensus in democratic representative forms of government is necessary, it is always accompanied by dissent and disagreement as to how society should be governed by groups and parties who oppose the status quo. When consensus is reached then, it is always conflictual and shot through with discord or debate.

Agonistic pluralism recognizes conflict as an essential component of any politics and that regardless of the desire to end argument or discord, it is necessary to accept that conflict, debate, and confrontation are valid forms of democratic expression. The universalizing and objectivizing forces of neoliberal hegemony aim to reduce or eliminate passionate and radical forms of expression, such as those located in the arts, from public space so that rational economic consensus among individuals and groups can be made more effective. Neoliberalism is generally understood throughout this work as the culture and politics favoring the intensification of free market capitalism while limiting social and democratic reforms.

Ideologically it refers to the primacy of the individual, freedom, entrepreneurialism, competition, and the adherence to career-oriented trajectories. It is the extension of market metaphors and competitive frameworks into all facets of social, economic, and political life. Neoliberalism is often made interchangeable with globalisation, especially with concern to global free trade agreements and economies. In the context of this research the globalizing connotations associated with neoliberalism relate to the expansion of street art muralism into local economies through mural-based tourism strategies, urban arts districts and festivals. This expansion of street art muralism through these economic, and more recently cultural, channels has been facilitated by financial institutions, commercial interests, and municipal governments. What neoliberalism cannot control or commoditize must be removed or eliminated in order for fuller economic potential to be realized. Mouffe argues that passionate and radical forms of expression should not be eradicated or commoditized, but instead recognised and mobilized in and for democratic projects. The key factor then is to encourage the kind of public and discursive terrain where different forms of citizenship identification and political expression can co-exist so as to promote adversarial rather than purely antagonistic relations among competing hegemonic projects.

Critical artistic practices, including those found in graffiti and street art, can play a vital part in this process by subverting the dominant liberal hegemony. More specific to this research, graffiti and street art muralism can help to visualize what is repressed and marginalized offering new possibilities for engaging with democratic institutions. Informal career pathways through subcultural mentorship and graffiti muralism can provide alternative modes of self-management, civic participation and engagement. Formal pathways for artistic career development also offer positive and fulfilling ways of engaging with public audiences while benefitting from economic incentives. These formal pathways, however, also engender an elitist culture grounded in methodological individualism which can diminish the development of adversarial forms of engagement between social actors and collective political identities that are at the heart of agonistic politics. The popularization of street art muralism and the professionalization of informal (subcultural) career pathways through municipal and private funding, regulation, and management also works to de-radicalize streets-based arts. In discussing economies of muralism it will be shown how this is part of a socio-economic strategy meant to commoditize these radical artistic forms of expression into more palatable backdrops for urban beautification and design projects, festivals, and tourist attractions.

Along these lines then, this research examines what street art muralism makes visible and what or who it omits, that is, whose voices are given space to be heard through public art and whose are silenced. *If street art muralism is critical of dominant hegemonic structures then how do street art muralists use their art and practice to challenge them? Does street art muralism confront public audiences to think in ways which may run counter to dominant hegemonies or to imagine alternatives?* Ultimately, what is at stake here are the types of agonistic public spaces where critical forms of art and muralism can be produced or practiced publicly in cities today. If these types of agonistic public spaces are at risk or are being actively restricted in some way then, *how are the forces of neoliberal hegemony obstructing their development?* The encouragement of different forms of citizenship identification and political expression, including those which are critical or antagonistic, can also help to better articulate oppositional voices and visions that have been ignored and rejected under neoliberal hegemony. It is one of the central arguments of this work that graffiti and street art muralism provide a means for alternative visions and critiques to be expressed in a public and legal manner which can help to expand public discussions and debates regarding social problems and issues.

This can be contrasted the work of Engin Isin (2012) who views antagonism as an expression of visceral indignation that can move individuals to act and to enact claims. Some of these claims take the form of open and deliberate challenges to institutional authority where individuals traverse symbolic and physical boundaries through purposive acts of citizenship. In this sense, to be political is to make a claim to rights as a member of a community, city, or state. Isin argues that citizenship is not a passive role, but an active process involving creative, inventive, and autonomous ways of becoming politically subjective by expressing *the right to claim rights*. Citizenship must be exercised in order to be recognized, "people constitute themselves as political subjects by the things they do, their deeds" (2012: 10). Isin argues that by allowing for moments of rupture and accounting for those actions that fall outside the general scope legal definitions of citizenship practices, the complex qualities that constitute acts can be more readily appreciated. Specifically, he points to the importance of accounting for civil disobedience to draw out the paradoxes of "legality and illegality, responsibility and answerability, intentionality and purposiveness, acts and actions, and rupture and change" (2012: 12). It is his position that the critical analysis of these acts of citizenship then can help to develop *vocabularies and repertoires of action* to better understand both the conditions and scales of citizenship, including the legal structure that could enable social actors to act as citizens in this way. The performance of citizenship is a passive role, a participative process

involving *practicing subjects* while the *enactment* of citizenship involves the *creation of subjects through deliberate acts.* While Isin's work has helped to elaborate on activist forms of citizenship which fall outside of institutional or normative scripts, how individual's operate within institutional boundaries, structures, norms, and rules to accomplish similar outcomes should not be ignored. This dissertation will argue that the performance and practice of citizenship should be taken just as seriously and can also help to develop *repertoires of practice and knowledge* that can be much more valuable to the development of novel or radical forms of democratic practice.

This emphasis on intentionality then provides a counterpoint from which to explore the political underpinnings of critical artistic interventions that Mouffe argues are integral to articulating forms of radical democratic practices. The ways in which individuals pursue activist projects to enact claims to injustices and rights or raise awareness to environmental and global issues can provide insight for how they are redefining their relationships with institutional support and authority. Critical artistic practices harness creativity and inventiveness to produce alternative visual scripts which confront and challenge hegemonic programs of political subjectivation and cultivate an interest in the pursuit of equality and identification. Understanding why some graffiti and street art muralists pursue either formal or informal pathways towards these activist projects then can also provide insight into the ways in which individuals either creatively resist or support institutional authority.

Moreover, the informal or formal pathways that graffiti and street artists pursue in the development of an arts career should also not be left out of this conversation. These pathways engender alternative practices and encourage the development of practical forms of knowledge which can lend to the expansion of artistic and social critique. The artists I have followed in this research have been able to maintain expressions of artistic critique in their fight against hegemony by gaining increased autonomy through a commitment to practicing more inclusive business and organization strategies but also by partnering with institutions. In doing so they both embrace and resist new codifications of commoditization by accepting some level of commoditization of authenticity and liberation, allowing them to extend networks for themselves and others, creating more opportunities for success. Entrepreneurial forms of governance may reproduce commercially oriented mindsets, but it remains to be seen if those in the graffiti and street art communities are resigning their informal habits or tactics entirely.

Important to this argument is a concentrated or grounded sociology of the urban and of the city. After all, it is in the city that these phenomena were born and have matured, and it is in the city

where I find them presently for my particular research interests. The *right to the city*, as envisioned by Henri Lefebvre (1996) and then later developed by David Harvey (2008, 2012), and to similar effect carried in the formulations of authenticity by Zukin (1995, 2010) are of central interest here. In particular, the implications they raise concerning the need for both individual and collective action to ameliorate these crises speaks to a similar need for a deeper appreciation of the socio-political relationships between creativity and political subjectivity. In *Rebel Cities* (2012) Harvey explores the possibilities for class-based urban social movements to locate a position within the capitalist framework from which to articulate a claim to the city as a collective right. This collective right to the city can only be realized by unifying the geographies of capitalist oppression –work and living spaces –which places the focus of such revolutionary movements not simply on the factory or the workplace, but in the home and across the city as a whole. Importantly, the *right to the city* involves a creative right of people to change and reinvent the city's built environment more after their hearts' desire. The logic of capitalism is production for profit and the exploitation of labor which aims to control and govern urban space, everyday life, and the reproduction of capitalist social relations. The critical struggle then, is to free everyday life from capitalist organizations and interests, to bring about the management of urban space to produce positive and meaningful outcomes which speak to the socio-political, cultural, and historical uniqueness of the communities where these struggles are situated. Essentially, Harvey sees the *right to the city* as a way station towards the greater goal of the total revolution of exploitive systems. But this *right to the city* is a complicated right that demands action by those who invoke it. Alliances and creative collaborations between labor unions, intellectuals, artists, professionals, and other organizations must be encouraged, nurtured, and sustained in order to fuel innovation and the production of new ideas and solutions to the problems and challenges in today's changing cities.

Chapter Outlines

In the first chapter, I trace the growth and development of muralism in North America since the turn of the 20th century. The chapter opens with a discussion on the importance of Mexican and New Deal muralism to social and political critique in North America. Then the argument is made that the Civil Rights Movement reinvigorated radical political attitudes among marginalised and disaffected groups in American cities lending to the development of new forms of social and political forms of artistic expression. The late 1960s and early 1970s were marked with a break from the state as the sole patron of mural arts, the growth of community muralism,

and the rise of graffiti and street art in New York City, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Chicago. These artistic forms of expression became a platform for community activism and the political voice of the marginalized and disenfranchised in the United States during this period. At the same time, artists were increasingly co-opted by commercial and government interests which were intent on controlling muralism, including its radical proponents, through regulation and sponsorship. This chapter ends with a discussion on the role muralism has had in making the invisible visible, giving voice to the voiceless, engaging public audiences, and critiquing dominant hegemonic structures.

The second chapter traces the emergence and growth of street art muralism as a distinct streets-based art that cannot be defined as graffiti or post graffiti (Waclawek 2011), street art or muralism, but something else altogether. Street art muralism is a combination of these elements, drawing from their forms of social organization and repertoires of action, but also a new form of public art altogether with its own distinct forms of organization and practice. Historical and ethnographic data (Castleman 1982, Cooper & Chalfant 1984, Lachmann 1988, Ferrell1996, Maxwell 1997, Gauthier1998, Kephart2001, Barthel2002, MacDonald 2002, Halsey & Young 2006, MacGillivray & Curwen 2007, Kramer 2010, Waclawek 2011) will be used to help outline and then analyze the social organization of graffiti and street artists, and provide support for the characterization of street art muralism as the by-product of these subcultural developments. Ultimately, street art muralism is argued as being the dominant form of visual artistic expression of public art in cities today embodying the styles and approaches of the graffiti and street art subcultures which helped to give birth to it.

The third chapter looks at the growth of *economies of muralism* in North American cities and the refashioning of graffiti and street art through strategies of regulation, professionalization, and commoditization to enhance tourism, local commerce, and beautify urban space. Graffiti and street art muralism contribute to the city's authenticity and distinctiveness by being re-fashioned as aesthetic regenerators of neighborhoods and commercial magnetizers for local commerce. North American cities are encouraging the development of creative industries and are incorporating street art muralism into the arts infrastructure helping to re-invigorate city centres and local economies. An important part of this discussion revolves around how urban arts managers and cadres –artists, organizers, and other stakeholders –compete, cooperate, and negotiate for control over city space in their efforts to remake the city in a manner befitting their particular interests and those of their constituents. At the same time, mural-based tourism strategies which uplift street art over graffiti also create tensions between artists and stakeholders in these arts

communities which increasingly are being manifested in antagonistic attitudes and vandalism. Finally, this chapter will also look at the economic, cultural and political cross-pollination between cities and communities through street art and muralism, in particular between Montreal, Miami, and Philadelphia in terms in of their respective graffiti, street, and mural arts projects.

The final chapter, *Citizen-Muralists; Citizen-Artists* explores how street art muralism is being mobilized towards activist projects lending to a return to the political for the mural arts. This chapter will extend the work of Isin (2012), Mouffe (2005, 2018), and Boltanksi & Chiapello (2005) by widening the field of inquiry and applying it to street art and contemporary muralism more generally. Tensions between activist orientations in the street art world and the commoditizing imperatives of neoliberal cultural economies manifest in conflicts and contradictions surrounding project goals, funding and management. Efforts to manage and commoditize socially engaged muralism can also place limits on how these activist projects creatively confront and critique the status quo in public spaces. Artists and organizers must navigate these inconsistencies while struggling to establish better *vocabularies and repertoires of practice and knowledge* so that these activist projects can successfully reach their goals as well as communicate their intended messages and critiques to wider audiences.

In the conclusion I summarize my findings and arguments concerning the role of street art muralism as a public art, discuss the implications of new forms of artistic agency, and offer some suggestions for how graffiti and street art cadres can be used to help expand both the access to and interest in radical forms of democratic practices. First, the continuing significance and value of the Mexican and New Deal Era murals to current conversations on racism and colonialism, censorship and freedom of expression will be discussed. Some of the murals produced during the New Deal era have come under scrutiny by special interest and community groups in United States for their content and subject matter. Several murals in Chicago schools and Victor Arnautoff's murals in George Washington High School in San Francisco will be used to show how they are still relevant to public discussions regarding institutionalized racism and decolonization. Second, a final argument for the important role of institutional funding and support for large scale and monumental street art projects and how graffiti subcultures need to be included in them will be made. Engaging with or making room for informal urban arts cadres can better manage antagonisms between graffiti and street artists, help preserve public mural works, and ultimately improve the success of mural arts projects. Third, the important role that street art muralists have in passing on repertoires of practice and knowledge to the younger generation of artists will be discussed.

Working with institutions and communities in collaborative ways can empower both the artists and the people to create lasting social change. Cadres need to dispense with the competition with each other and think about how their work and contributions can help to build stronger networks and programs of practice that following generations can build upon. Finally, I offer some suggestions for how street art muralism can be used to amplify and elevate radical democratic practices by raising awareness and bringing people together. Ultimately, we can learn a great deal from our current muralists, the projects that they are both a part of and create, as well as the social cultural, and political controversies and contradictions which emerge from them.

I.
A Genealogical Primer

Introduction

In order to appreciate the current topography of the mural arts movement it is instructive to explore its social, cultural, and political underpinnings. As a genealogical exercise, this chapter will trace the historical roots of muralism in North America, its artists, stakeholders, and the major cultural and socio-political currents in which they have been embedded. As a discussion concerning critical artistic practices, this chapter will reveal how artists as social actors, endowed with reason, have acted to rise against their domination to construct new interpretations of their realities and the oppression of others in the service of social, cultural, and political critique. Domination is not a passive or unconscious reality, rather, it is an active and collaborative relationship between oppressor and the oppressed. Power relations unfold in disputed sites, in this case public murals, where fragile agreements between stakeholders are continually established and redefined. The Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe (2008) argues that public space is a battleground where competing hegemonic projects confront each other and, that as a form of discourse, critical artistic practices can reveal and subvert dominant social and political ideologies. The distinction between *politics* and the *political* is a key opposition which will be explored throughout the course of this chapter and dissertation. On the one hand, the *political* is understood as a "space of power, conflict and antagonism" where challenges are made against the status quo and which always require a choice to be made "between conflicting alternatives."[1] For the early muralists in Mexico and the United States this was a choice between capitalism and socialism which their artistic works were made to contrast and critique. On the other hand, *politics* is understood as an ordering of the space of human activity and relations, which is also an organizing of general attitudes in service of the status quo. This exploration of the historical roots of muralism then is also an examination of the antagonistic basis of the *political* in public art and how *politics* of modern liberalism have worked to contain this opposition.[2]

Muralism has a varied and diverse history having been used to communicate a wide range of social, cultural, and political messages since the pre-modern ages. The Church and aristocratic nobility were the primary patrons of the mural arts commissioning tapestries and heroic frescos of biblical and royal figures in many of the palaces and holy temples across Europe and North America. Since the 20th century, commercial and government patrons have mobilized the mural arts for decorative and cultural projects, to popularize or

celebrate historical and national figures, and to promote state rhetoric. Muralism remained a popular form of art across North America in a variety of settings, however, social, economic, and political interests have increasingly placed limitations on how artists express their ideas and perspectives.

The historical roots of this struggle are found in the Mexican and American mural movements of the 1920s and 1930s, though the story of muralism as a public art begins a few years before. Commercial and government interests have made great efforts to contain and control the social and political antagonisms of the mural arts to have them serve the interests of the ruling classes. It is the resistance to these efforts by artists and activists that has helped to shape the initial landscape of mural arts in North America. Moreover, the Mexican and American mural movements of the early 20th century were the precursors to a more radical movement of art and politics which began to take shape in the late 1950s and 1960s. This later movement would irrevocably change how muralism could be used to visualize alternative politics, history and memory.

Muralism goes Public: The Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915

In 1915 San Francisco hosted the Panama Pacific International Exhibition (PPIE) to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal and the rebirth of the city following the great 1906 earthquake. Like many of the world fairs this exposition also was meant to showcase Western progress through architecture, science, technology, and the arts. Among the exhibits was a replica Ford automobile plant which had a fully functional Model T production line, operational cross country telephone lines, and airplanes performing stunts above the exhibition grounds. The architecture of the pavilions was Cyclopean, replete with colonnades, pillars, grand fountains, and courtyards. Throughout the exhibit were numerous sculptures and paintings, including a series of 35 murals by American and European artists on public display. Most of the murals had been completed by artists in New York City, shipped to San Francisco where they were finished under the watchful eye of the exhibition's Director of Color, Jules Guerin, and then installed just prior the main event.[3]

Wall paintings prior to 1906 in San Francisco were composed mostly of commercial signs and decorative pieces directly on wall surfaces. Most of these had been lost to the earthquake and fire a decade prior. The murals of the PPIE provided a different approach to the use of wall paintings in a public context. Prior to the exhibit, murals were only indoor decorative pieces, so the choice to place them outdoors made them the subject of some public discussion. There was also a vast amount of sculpture and canvass art, some twenty thousand separate works, on display throughout the

exhibition, the most that had ever been presented publically at an event such as this.[45]

The selected artists were all academic painters who had been studio trained in the grand European style of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Ostensibly, the murals were meant to be decorative in function, serving to please exhibition onlookers as they passed through the gateways and arches from section to section. The historical and allegorical themes of the paintings, however, reveal a seemingly deeper and more ideological purpose in justifying the narrative of manifest destiny, Western progress and cultural precedence.

In this sense, the PPIE was also a means to make visual the aspirations of the exposition organisers and sponsors, namely those aristocrats, bankers, mining and railroad barons who had the most to gain from the construction of the canal and rebuilding of the city. As part of the efforts of urban reconstruction then, these paintings were meant to reflect the supposed civic mindedness of commercial and government patrons. It also situated the vision of these interests as a progressive and leftist one, heavily entrenched in an ideology of development and enlightenment, enabling a rhetoric of reconstruction in the public sphere.

Not all the murals were simply decorative, some appear to have contained deeper meanings or messages, even only subtly placed. William de Leftwich Dodge's mural, *Atlantic and Pacific (fig. 1.1),* for example, was meant to represent the labor which went into the building the Panama Canal. Flanked on either side by the convergence of the eastern and western nations, a figure reminiscent of the great Titan Atlas pulls the ends of the world together through sheer physical power. On the western side, farmers and miners are

Figure 1.1: *Atlantic and Pacific* by William Leftwich Dodge, Panama Pacific International Exhibit, San Francisco, 1915.

led by a pair of oxen, symbolic of masculinity, strength, leadership, renewal, and the enduring power of labor. Bound and driven by the group, the oxen pushes forward towards an inevitable future. While on the eastern side, an assorted collection of colorful and exotic characters carry nothing except flags or banners.[6] A woman in front of the eastern procession offers her child to the titan while the rest

seemingly beseech him seeking direction and purpose. Behind them, relegated to the background of these assorted characters, is the spectre of an elephant. In India, elephants are a symbol of strength and power, but also luck, loyalty and wisdom –qualities which were popularly attributed to the primitive or noble savage. A single, naked male figure stands arms outstretched before the western group, about to be pushed into the waters by the oxen as they march forward. Dodge's choice to include this tragic indigenous character within the larger work celebrating both the construction of the canal and the precedence of western culture appears to have been a purposeful act. According to Ganz (2015), Dodge meant this figure to represent Native American culture which was being wiped out with continued western expansion. This figure could also represent the thousands of West Indian laborers who either died from disease or inhuman working conditions during the French and American periods of the canal's construction.[7] In this sense then, Dodge may very well be one of the first North American muralists to use his art in a socially engaged manner.[8]

PPIE organisers provided placards and handbooks to contextualize and explain the murals to audiences, however, it seems that the public failed to grasp much of what they were meant to convey.[9] This was an important lesson for patrons in terms of the political use of muralism to affect public perceptions. If muralism was going to be used to "re-express specific private interests as a public good, it had better do so with greater force"[10] and certainly in a visual language the general public could more easily understand.

Although labelled as public art, the mural paintings included in the exposition were underpinned by the interests of private investors and the organisers. The content of the murals were mostly allegorical, emulating European styles and forms, emphasizing colonial themes based around the enlightenment, manifest destiny, western progress and development. It seems that the *public* in public art was, at this point, a rather dubious and unconvincing orientation. For a public art, it apparently did not connect well with the *public* it seemed to be made for but instead pandered to more elitist tastes. Labelling the exposition as a *public* event helped to organize and give it purpose, especially with concern to the managing interests, but truly it was a paying audience more than the general San Franciscan public.[11] Moreover, the rhetoric surrounding the exposition as *public* also ignored working class families who were forcibly evicted and their homes demolished during the construction for the event.[12] Regardless of these unscrupulous origins, the exposition was considered to be a huge success with a total calculated attendance of over 18 million visitors over its 10 month run.[13] There were half a million visitors on the last day alone. Over 45 million dollars had been injected into California's economy from

outside of the state and after all expenses had been calculated the exposition made a profit of approximately 1.3 million dollars. Besides providing a convincing image that San Francisco had (mostly) been revived since the great quake and fire a decade prior, there was a significant increase of tourism and investor dollars, as well as new residents who wanted to come and experience the Jewel City for themselves and be a part of its continued (re)growth.[14]

Muralism of the Mexican Revolution

Although the PPIE may have been the first instance of paintings showcased in a public setting, contemporary muralism in North America is most commonly associated with the mural movement which came out of the Mexican revolution. During the 1920s, muralism was most popularly represented in the works of *Los Tres Grandes*: José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. After the war, muralism was mobilized to embolden post-revolutionary values in the largely poor and illiterate masses, and to help shape the new national consciousness. Large-scale socially and politically oriented murals were painted in and on public buildings celebrating indigenous Mesoamerican culture and history in an effort to bring unity and a common vision to a divided country after the war. *Los Tres Grandes* were the most notable of the many artists employed in these efforts and whose murals remain today throughout Mexico, regarded as national treasures. The three had been students of the famed Dr. Atl (Gerardo Murillo Cornado) whose 1906 manifesto called for the creation of monumental public art that reflected the lives and culture of the Mexican people. Exposed to socialist political ideology and post-impressionism during his travels in Europe several years prior, Dr. Atl returned with the hopes of creating a modern indigenous form of artistic expression through muralism. The influence of socialist politics and Dr. Atl's teachings on the lives and work of Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros cannot be understated. Orozco's narratives often depicted dark and deleterious outcomes, particularly for the indigenous characters, and were darker and foreboding of the modern age. Siqueiros shared Orozco's contempt towards modernism but he was far more radical and tended to include heavy political symbolism in his paintings. Rivera's work was more progressive and optimistic than his two counterparts, explicitly along socialist themes and often referenced white European modern culture. Orozco's contributions to muralism at this time were often eclipsed by the popularity of Rivera and the political activism of Siqueiros. It is the work of the latter two muralists, especially with concern to their explicit social and political attitudes that the following section will focus on.

After receiving criticism that their initial work at the National Preparatory School (San Ildefonso College) had mostly been

decorative and unrepresentative of the people, Siqueiros, Rivera, and Orozco sought advice from a friend and party member of the PCM (Mexican Communist Party) as to how to better connect with the masses.[15] The three muralists, excited and eager to paint on any walls, were yet to fully appreciate how to engage with their intended public audiences more substantially:

> The painters were not yet politically aware enough to realize that the walls of the National Prepatory School were inaccessible to the masses who made the Revolution and thus were inappropriate for their murals…It was all so new; there had never been an art movement concerned with addressing the people directly about their own social and economic welfare.[16]

The advice was simple: form a union of artists and discuss together how to better connect their art to the people's struggle. All three artists joined the PCM shortly after and helped to co-found *The Union of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors* at the end of 1923. The content of their mural work began to drift from allegory, historical sanitization, and folklore to more current and realistic depictions of cultural and political events.

An incredibly politically charged artist, Siqueiros had been radicalized at a young age fighting with the constitutional army in the revolutionary war. After completing his service he travelled Europe studying painting where he met Rivera and was introduced to cubism and Italian fresco.[17] Upon returning to Mexico, Siqueiros wrote his own manifesto, first appearing in the union's newsletter *El Machete* in December 1923.[18] Similar in form to that of his mentor Dr. Atl it called for the celebration of indigenous history and culture through public art. It differed in that it demanded the complete overthrow of the oppressive colonial regimes and bourgeois individualism that, he argued, had choked the collective expression out of modern art. For Siqueiros and other artists of the union, art and politics were inseparable. Muralism was the choice artistic mode to not only beautify public space but to represent this great social transformation and communicate collective ideals:

> We hail the monumental expression of art because such art is public property. We proclaim that this being the moment of social transformation from a decrepit to a new order, the makers of beauty must invest their greatest efforts in the aim of materializing an art valuable to the people, and our supreme objective in art, which is today an expression for individual pleasure, is to create beauty for all, beauty that enlightens and stirs to struggle.[19]

Dr. Atl's original statement had been eclipsed by the violence and division which marked the revolution so Siqueiros' manifesto came at just the right time. The Mexican mural movement was about to explode and it set the tone for those post-revolutionary artists eager to paint for the people. Importantly, his manifesto was more than just

a call to Mexican artists, it was call to *all artists,* to come together in creating a modern public art that could not just speak to the people but to contextualize their place in the developing industrial world.

Siqueiros was censured several times for his overly antagonistic and provocative works in Mexico and the United States throughout the 1920s and 30s. He also faced intense scrutiny from the Mexican government for his continued involvement in the labor movement and reproving of the revolutionary regime for not delivering on its promises for social and economic reform.[20] Siqueiros often voiced criticism through the pages of *El Machete* of the radicals who defaced union murals and the government on all fronts from labor to housing. Moreover, in September 1924 *El Machete* became the official voice of the PCM while Siqueiros was still the executive director. Soon enough the government presented the union an ultimatum: if radical political criticism continued to be printed they would have their funding removed for mural painting.

The union was left internally divided over having to choose between art and politics. Siqueiros and a majority of the union artists argued that they could continue to criticize the government by creating 'portable murals' through *El Machete* while Rivera and a handful of others opted to pursue their muralism 'at any cost.' Orozco decided that he wanted nothing to do with any of it and walked away from the entire affair, leaving the country to paint abroad.[21] After several heated meetings Siqueiros won the support of a majority of the union artists, while Rivera, who refused to abide, was expelled. Government funding for the union ended in December of 1924 leaving only Rivera and one other artist, Roberto Montenegro, as the remaining muralists. With his funding cut, Siqueiros increasingly spent more time writing and drawing political critique in *El Machete*, speaking at labor meetings, attending peasant rallies, and less painting murals. Rivera continued to paint at the Ministry of Education for the government until 1928.[22]

Regardless of the fall out with the union, the two artists remained in contact and in March of that year they met again in Moscow. Siqueiros had led a delegation of miners, teachers, railroad, and textile workers to the Fourth International Congress of Red Trade Unions. Rivera had remained there for the past year on invitation for the 10th anniversary of the Russian Revolution to lecture and finish painting a commissioned mural. Rivera had also taken time to meet with the Russian poet and artist Mayakovsky to discuss their mutual struggle in freeing art from aristocratic and bourgeois interests. A meeting with Stalin was set but the two artists were unable to convince him of the dangers of aristocratic and academic influence on post-revolutionary art, something they had firsthand knowledge of back in Mexico. The congress in Russia and meeting with Stalin in 1928 had a lasting impact on both Siqueiros

and Rivera, however the two of them would have a falling out over their differing opinions concerning Trotsky and the labor movement and more generally.[23]

Exiled after serving time in prison,[24] Siqueiros left for the United States in 1932 on invitation to teach fresco at the Chouinard School of Art in Los Angeles. Rivera had already been invited to paint in San Francisco the year before, completing both *The Allegory of California* (1931) in the city's Stock Exchange building and *The Making of a Fresco, Showing the Building of a City,* at the California School of Fine Arts (1931-32). Rivera was also a socially and politically oriented artist, however, unlike Siqueiros, he was not as intensely involved in the labor movement and radical politics. He engaged differently with the political elite and in that he used his muralism to enact conversations about politics, history, and morality, particularly surrounding the contrast between capitalism and socialism. Rivera's arrival and mural work in the United States was said to have put into question the relationship between leftist politics, art, and the public.[25] Since the turn of the century, muralism in the United States had been predominantly allegorical and figurative in content with private patrons leaving little to no room for any socially or politically themed content. Although intriguing, compositionally progressive, and deeply realist, as all Rivera's painting were, the California murals[26] lacked the controversial character of his later works in Detroit (1932-233) and New York (1933).[27]

Man at the Crossroads (1933) *(fig. 1.2)*, painted in the ground floor lobby of the Radio Corporation Arts Building of Rockefeller Center, New York City, was perhaps Rivera's most controversial American mural. A complex narrative of contemporary social, political, and scientific culture, the mural would generate some of the most vociferous reactions from the public and the political far left. His mural was criticized for its explicit political content, including an unauthorized portrait of Lenin and several socialist thinkers. Before it could be finished Rivera was forced off of the project and the painting was destroyed. Almost a century later, it remains emblematic of the often difficult relationship between artistic freedoms and economic power. Given Rivera's tendency to express socialist currents in his work and the revolutionary attitudes of *Los Tres Grandes*, it was surprising that the Rockefeller's commissioned Rivera to paint it in the first place.[28]

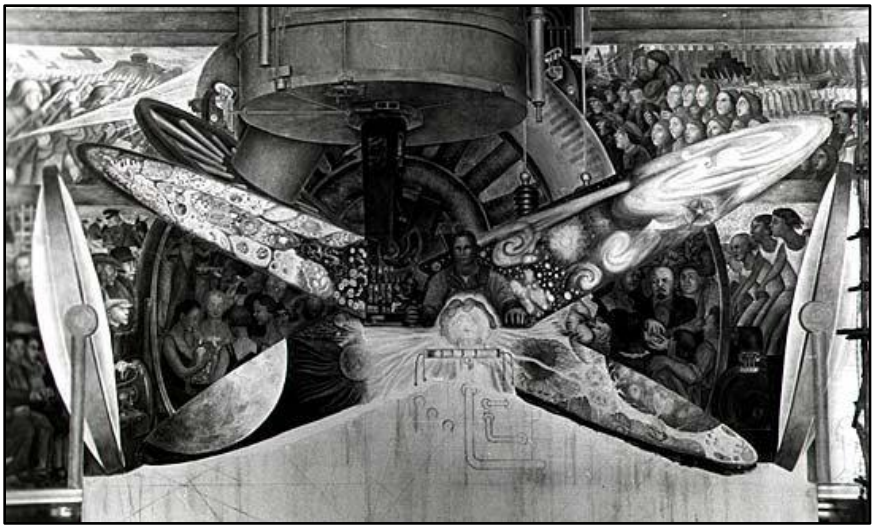

Figure 1.2: *Man at the Crossroads* (unfinished) Radio Corporation Arts Building, Rockefeller Center, New York City. 1933. The portrait of Lenin can be seen on the right side (middle) of the image. Photo by Lucienne Bloch.

The mural's central figure is a worker who appears to be operating a great and fantastic machine which stands at the crossroads of history. A giant disembodied fist reaches out through the machinery beneath him clutching a glowing orb containing recombined atoms and divided cells representing the dynamics of biological and chemical reproduction. Just below this on the ground are germinating plants and trees around some industrial piping which extracts natural resources and energy seemingly to power this wonderful and worldly machine. Anchored to the left and right of the worker are two giant lenses reflecting elliptical discs of light which cross propeller-like just behind the worker and the orb. Within the ellipses are images which represent the discoveries made possible by the inventions of the telescope –planets, stars, and nebulas –and the microscope –cells, bacteria, and germs. To either side of the great machine were projections of modern social and political life, an allegory of the competing visions of capitalism and communism. On the left side were depicted images of rich and decadent socialites enjoying a leisurely evening at a night-club, a demonstration of unemployed workers being clubbed by police, and an army of gas masked soldiers marching to war representing "the dissolution of social morality, repression and war, personified by rich capitalists…including portraits of the Rockefeller family."[29] On the right side the figure of Lenin is seen holding the hands of a Black American, a Russian soldier, and a worker symbolizing the alliance of the future, female athletes exercising, a procession of marching May Day demonstrators hand in hand with workers all "being led towards socialism by Marx, Lenin, other Communist leaders."[30]

In May of that year, towards the finishing of the mural, Rivera was interviewed by a New York reporter for *The World Telegram*

who inquired about the scene with Lenin. Rivera explained his belief that fascism in Europe could only be defeated if the Soviets and the Americans joined forces, and that Lenin, being the founder of the USSR and a prominent communist, was the ideal symbol for this proposed union. In using Lenin as the centre of this alliance Rivera knew that he was going against public opinion in America, but he felt that as an artist it was his duty to present alternative perspectives to such real world issues. The following day the article appeared in the paper accusing Rivera of deceiving the Rockefeller's by not disclosing the inclusion of Lenin or the other anti-capitalist material. Soon after, Rivera received a communication from Nelson Rockefeller to substitute the face of Lenin with another unknown person.

Rivera stood his ground and responded that he would not remove the portrait of Lenin. Instead, he offered Rockefeller a compromise: he would replace the nightclub scene with one of Abraham Lincoln –a symbol of American unification and the abolition of slavery –surrounded by other important figures of the time such as

> John Brown, Nat Turner, William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, or with a scientific figure like Cyrus McCormick, whose reaping machine had contributed to the victory of the Union forces by facilitating the harvesting of wheat in the fields depleted of men.[31]

According to Rivera, the original early sketches that he had provided Rockefeller contained the figure of Lenin so he was not sure what the issue was. Besides, Rockefeller knew that he was a revolutionary painter and that he should have expected to see innovative and radical ideas in his works, especially in America where such things were the bedrock of the country's history.

After more than a week with no response from Nelson Rockefeller and an increased security presence around the work site, Rivera was concerned that serious action would be taken to have him remove the content, or worse, that he would be taken off the project entirely. He had one of his assistants, Lucienne Bloch, sneak her camera into the building and snap a photograph of the mural and the Lenin detail. The following week, the Rockefeller's had Rivera taken off the project. Although the mural was unfinished, Rivera was paid his commission and was barred from entering the premises of the Radio Corporation Arts Building, as were any photographers for that matter. Bloch's photos are the only known surviving records of the original mural which was subsequently draped and hidden from public view for a year until it was destroyed in February 1934. It was replaced with an allegorical mural of American industry by Jose Maria Sert, *American Progress,* which remains to this day in the lobby of the RCA building.[32]

There was a vocal response to the controversial stop work order on the mural and its covering from notable New York City academics and artists including John Sloan, the sociologist Lewis Mumford, and photographer and artist Alfred Stieglitz. There were also conservative artists from the Advance American Art Commission who marched and protested against the hiring of foreign artists for public works. As Rivera put it, "Rockefeller's action to cover the mural…became a cause célèbre. Sides were drawn."[33] Some artist's groups wrote manifestos demanding that Rivera be

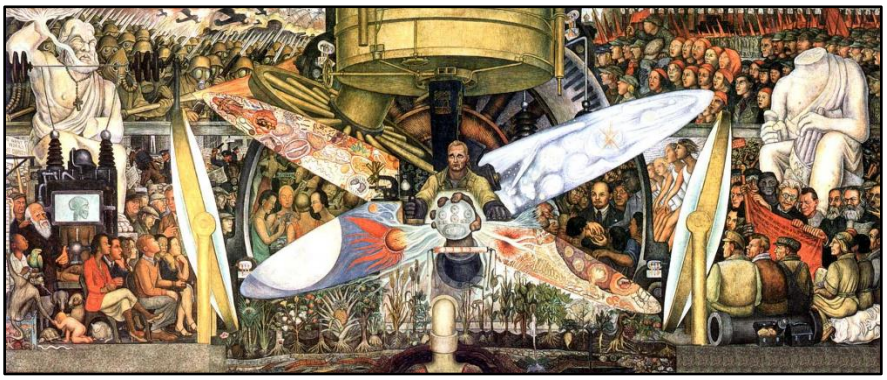

Figure 1.3: *Man Controller of the Universe.* Diego Rivera, Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. 1934.

able to complete his mural and even asked him to march with them in protest of the decision.[34] The poet E.B. White penned the poem *I Paint What I See* in the New Yorker on May 20, 1933 which critiqued this decision by the Rockefeller's to have the mural destroyed and repainted. His poem quite vividly illustrated the philosophical and political differences and confrontation between Nelson Rockefeller and Diego Rivera over the mural he had been commissioned to paint in Rockefeller Plaza.[35] According to Rivera, "It was largely because of such protests that Rockefeller waited for nearly a year before he destroyed my mural."[36] By the time the Rockefeller's had the mural destroyed in February 1934, Rivera had already returned to Mexico where he was re-painting it on commission for the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City *(fig 1.3)*. Although slightly smaller in scale than the original, Rivera had no restrictions and so endeavored to re-create it and add some well-placed additions. Of notable mention were portraits of Nelson Rockefeller and Charles Darwin, who is surrounded by animals looking matter of fact at the viewer, pointing to an ape holding the hand of a human child, as if to suggest a relationship. Rockefeller was worked into the night club scene, and is seated just a short distance away from venereal disease germs in the micro-biology ellipse. He also changed the title to *Man, Controller of the Universe*, that, along with the additional portraits, subtly referenced his atheism and distaste for the Rockefeller's. One of the consequences of the

fall out with the RCA building mural was that Rivera lost his mural project with General Motors which was to commence later that year and he was cut off from painting commissions in the United States for nearly a decade until he painted *Pan American Unity*[37] *(fig. 1.4)* for the 1940 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay.[38]

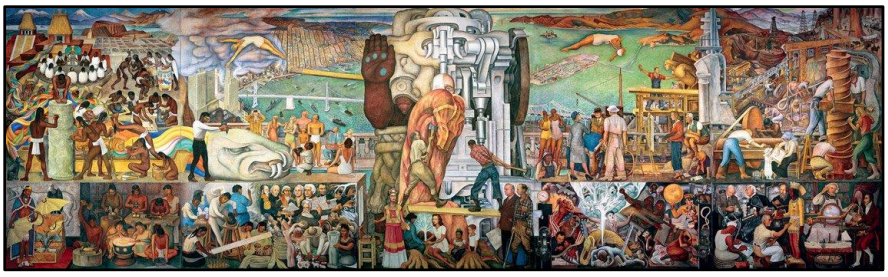

Figure 1.4: *Pan American Unity*, Diego Rivera Theatre at the City College of San Francisco. Diego Rivera. 1940.

Siqueiros was far too intensely involved in labor politics and activism throughout his early career to focus on muralism. After his exile to the United States he began to focus back on muralism again, where he completed several projects in the early 1930s which generated political criticism. During his short tenancy at the Chouinard School of Art in Los Angeles he endeavored to produce a socially conscious mural with his students which led him to establish and develop the techniques that would come to define contemporary mural methods.[39] The 2 story mural he painted with his 20 students, *Workers Meeting,*[40] (*fig 1.5*) depicted a multi-racial group of workers at a meeting headed by a union organizer. Authorities argued that this pro-worker theme could instigate rebellious and antagonistic attitudes among the public and demanded its erasure. Moreover, on the night of the mural's inauguration on July 7th 1932 Siqueiros held a lecture for some 800 spectators where proceeded to heavily decry capitalism, North American imperialism, and the bourgeois art world. If the political elements of the work had not caused enough protest from formal parties, the multi-racial elements of the mural had also enraged local residents and even the media to level attacks on the art school that the mural as was disruptive and needed to be covered or removed:

> It did not take long for this message to reach racists, who immediately subjected the school to vehement verbal abuse. The Los Angeles newspapers joined the attack, and Mrs. Chouinard was forced to erect a wall high enough to shield the mural from innocent eyes. In the end, however, nothing short of total removal would satisfy the racist elements and this was fully accomplished by the Red Squad of the Los Angeles Police Department, armed with a court order.[41]

There are only several surviving photos of this mural and of Siqueiros painting it with his students as it was not permitted to remain visible for public view. Almost immediately, the wall had been repainted, white washed by the same interests he had publicly criticised on the eve of its inauguration.[42] Siqueiros had only just arrived in the United States and already he had stirred up controversy and protest surrounding the content and purpose of muralism as a public art.

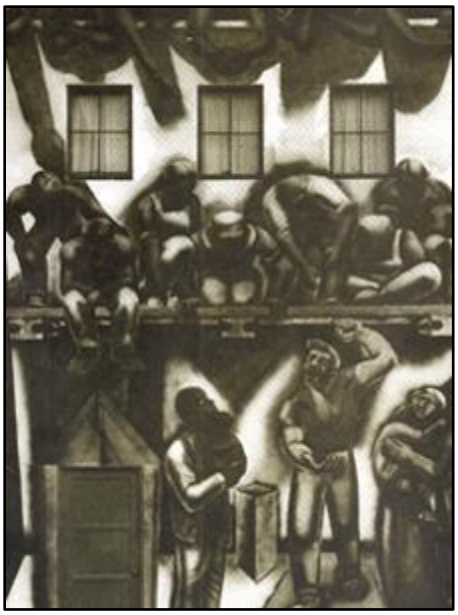

Figure 1.5: *Workers Meeting*, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Chouinard School of Art., 1932.

The last mural Siqueiros painted in the United States during the 1930s, *América Tropical (fig. 1.6)*, was equally as controversial. He had been commissioned by the Plaza Art Center, a commercial location on Olvera Street in the old Mexican section of Los Angeles, to paint a mostly aesthetic mural depicting "fruits, exotic plants and sensuous women."[43] Deliberately disobeying the patron's orders, Siqueiros took it upon himself to make a strong statement given that this was a much larger and more public wall than the courtyard of the art school potentially reaching a much wider audience. He painted most of the mural, including all the elements that the patron had requested, but left the final touches for the last couple of nights of its scheduled completion. Using the spray gun and film projector techniques he had developed at the Chouinard School of Art, he secretly finished the central figure just prior to its inauguration: a native man crucified on a double cross on top of which rested the imperial American eagle. The gun barrels of guerilla fighters protruded from the jungle on either side taking aim at the cross while pieces of broken and destroyed ancient temples lay scattered on the jungle floor below.[44] Siqueiros had made a direct and public anti-imperial statement of the doubled exploitation of the Mexican native by the elite classes and by imperialism. Indigenous warriors, or the revolutionary proletariat, stood ready to take violent action against their oppressors.[45] Clearly provocative, Siqueiros' final mural in America was not given much opportunity to be seen or appreciated. The mural was partially painted over soon after its completion to block viewers from seeing it from the street below. Several years later it was fully painted over at the request of locals and then left to the elements for decades until it was rediscovered in

2005 and restoration efforts were set in motion.[46] It would only be later into his career and life, after his return to Mexico, that Siqueiros would paint some of the largest public Mexican murals of the 1950s and 60s. His murals at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) and the *Polyforum Cultural Siqueiros* are a testament to his capacity to paint on a monumental scale for a public audience.[47]

Figure 1.6: Digital reproduction of *América Tropical* (1932) by David Alfaro Siqueiros. Created by Luis C. Garza (2010)

Although Siqueiros only worked in the United States for a short period, the impact that his work and ideas had on American muralism and art was immense. He helped to introduce techniques of modern and American fresco, and instilled in his students and others the importance of painting socially conscious murals, as well as doing so collectively. Moreover, he impressed upon his students the need to form an organization of artists that could act to fight against the often public and political attacks which would likely be levelled at such antagonistic and controversial works. Students and faculty from the Chouinard School of Art, along with some art club members formed the Bloc of Mural Painters and following Siqueiros' lead would go on to paint murals directly on wall in Los Angeles in the following years.[48] Painting murals directly on walls rather than on canvasses was a powerful and innovative move in the development of political art. A mural on a wall could not be taken down, bought, sold, or copied for distributive purposes.[49]

The Mexican muralists had been in the United States for only a short period but during their stay had managed to leave a number of murals which would go on to be considered historical and cultural treasures. They had also left a lasting impression on a number of artists and students who would go on to continue painting murals when the federal government inaugurated its own public mural program several years later. American artists were also eager to express their social and political ideas and critiques with public audiences. The United States was also going through its own challenging period with the Great depression and the build up to the Second World War was on the horizon. Like in Mexico, muralists

started to use their art to counter official narratives, and subvert dominant social and political ideologies.

Muralism of the New Deal Era

The success of Mexican muralism in the 1920s gave the impetus for the formation of American arts programs which incorporated muralism on a nationwide scale. The Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) was the first government relief art project of its kind which served as the template for publicly funded art programs nationwide for the next decade. The PWAP was only a one year pilot project from 1933 to 1934 but it was succeeded by the Federal Arts Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which continued until the mural programs were dissolved in June 1943. The mural programs developed under Roosevelt's New Deal restructuring continued the public patronage of art with the mobilization of artists as a civil work force. These programs employed millions of Americans during the Great Depression, including over 10,000 artists. Combined, these programs created over 2500 murals nationwide, with more than 200 having been done in New York City alone.[50]

Leading from the Mexican example, the main locations for murals produced through these programs were public schools and municipal hospitals, housing projects, welfare institutions and penitentiaries, the world's fair, libraries, military institutions, parks and zoos, airports, post offices and courthouses. The public orientation of these murals demanded that content move away from the mythic and allegorical towards locally recognizable characters and culture. This meant that they needed to appeal the tastes and values of both local and regional populations while maintaining didactic themes. On the one hand, murals needed to be educational, fostering awareness and pride in American history and culture. On the other hand, they needed to be therapeutic and morally uplifting to improve people's health and spirits during the Depression. Historical themes focused on people's roots and a commitment to preserving cultural traditions and industries rather than focusing on the calamitous present or the uncertain future. The heroic laborer, therefore, was a popular subject in public murals and was always portrayed as the cornerstone to the success of the American project. Most murals revolved around two types of scenes, *American Genesis* and *American Stuff*. *Genesis* murals focused on reconstructing the period or conditions of a town's or the country's foundation, incorporating elements that celebrated working, building, and achieving of things together. *Stuff* murals were more site specific and focused on idiosyncratic features and local lore of a town or place where the mural was to be installed.[51]

American mural programs were heavily formalized and artists did not have as much creative freedom as their Mexican predecessors. There was also much more state oversight through program management. New York artists, for instance, had to provide examples of existent work and evidence of established connections to the art world (gallery or art dealer memberships, relevant newspaper or periodical clippings) to the municipal art commission in order to be considered eligible to participate in the mural program in the first place.[52] Arts committees and commissions were designated for regions or cities which included an assortment of political, institutional, and cultural members. The New York Art Commission, for instance, was composed of 10 members including the mayor; the sitting presidents of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New York Public Library, and the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences; a painter, a sculptor, an architect, and 3 non-professionals. Established 5 years after the 1893 World Columbian Exhibition, the commission was in many ways a response to the City Beautiful Movement in its promotion of arts and architecture as a means to improve the moral and civic virtues of New Yorkers.[53] Since all murals were done in tax supported institutions this commission approved all decorative additions prior to completion. Once an artist had been selected, there were often lengthy meetings concerning the content and subject matter of the proposed wall painting. Painters had to research the subject and submit a preliminary sketch of the intended mural for committee approval. The artist also had to organize all materials, equipment, and personnel (assistants) associated with the awarded project. After the mural was completed it needed final approval from the municipal art committee. Ultimately, a mural's acceptance and completion hinged on both the program supervisor's approval and the capacity of the painter member of the committee to persuade the rest of the municipal art committee members of its value.[54] Beyond this rigorous process of approval, mural projects needed to withstand the concerns, criticisms and complaints from special interest groups, municipal officials, and the public upon completion or installation.

As these mural programs developed there would be more than one occasion where provocative content or political attitudes created disagreements between artists, program administrators, and the public. Local program administrators discouraged any controversial content with elements of social or political protest beyond those which were patriotically themed. Even with rigid systems of approval and selection there were a number of disagreements and clashes over themes and content, with some artists going completely against program guidelines. There were also some strong political and social justice currents which ran through a number of murals which were produced during this period.[55] The horrific events of the

First World War and economic uncertainty of the Depression had influenced many to embrace radical ideas and politics. The highly publicized controversies surrounding the Mexican muralists and their socialist politics had also made an impact on a number of prominent American artists including Clifford Wright, Bernard Zakheim, Ralph Stackpole, and Victor Arnautoff. More artists were getting involved in labor politics and aligning themselves with a concern for the welfare of the citizenry their art was supposedly meant to serve. They felt a duty to not just paint murals for their own personal gains and satisfaction but to enrich communities and positively affect society with their art. They wanted their art to play an educational role which celebrated American culture and values, which, despite its more recent shortcomings, had indeed made significant progress. There were many murals painted during the New Deal Era, and not all were controversial, however, there were a significant number of socially and politically motivated works that were done by the artists named above and more.[56]

One of the first projects under the PWAP was a series of murals to be painted by 25 artists in the stairwells and lobby of the newly built Coit Tower monument in San Francisco starting in September 1933. Controversy erupted when several artists were accused of including references that were interpreted as being communist symbols or socialist propaganda by program officials.[57] Many in the San Francisco art community were opposed to the destruction of Rivera's mural by the Rockefeller's earlier that year. In support, several of the artists fashioned their murals in Rivera's style including references to socialist politics and the struggle of the working class. This would be a defining controversy which influenced the direction of the mural programs and the degree of administrative oversight in the federally funded mural projects in the United States. This project and the controversy which grew around it also displayed just how influential the work of the

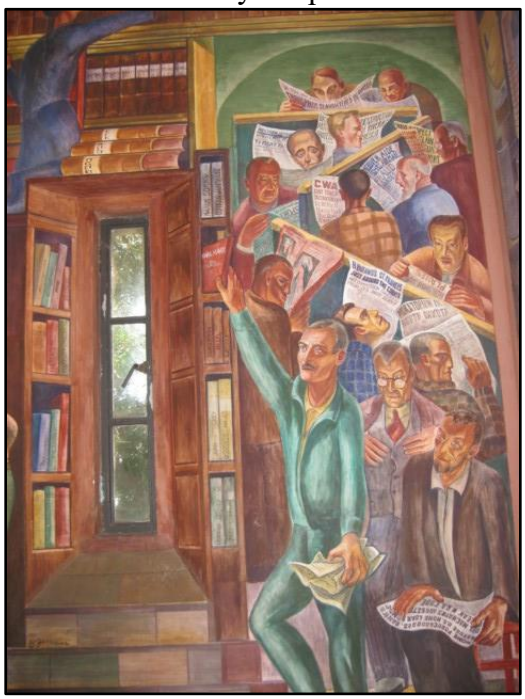

Figure 1.7: *Library*, Bernard Zakheim, Coit Tower. 1934. Photo by Shaina Potts

Mexican muralists had been and how they had planted the seeds of socially conscious art into the minds of American artists.

Ralph Stackpole's *Industries of California,* for instance, depicted a variety of workers compositionally in line with Rivera's initial sketches for his uncompleted mural in Rockefeller Center. John Langley Howard's mural included a column of solemn faced miners and workers with one carrying a flyer calling for them to demonstrate on May 1st of that year. Zakheim's *Library (fig. 1.7)* included a depiction of Howard reaching for a copy of *Das Kapital*. Behind him Stackpole is seen reading a paper with a headline referencing protests against the destruction of Rivera's fresco by the Rockefeller's. A number of books by Jewish and Soviet authors are

Figure 1.8: *City Life*, Victor Arnautoff, Coit Tower, 1934. Photo by Shaina Potts

also included as well as a self-portrait of Zakheim reading the Torah. Arnautoff's *City Life (fig. 1.8)* depicted a newspaper stand selling popular left-wing titles such as *The New Masses*, *The Daily Worker*, *The Argonaut*, and the Spanish paper *Estampa.* Finally, and perhaps most controversial, was Clifford Wright's *Steelworker*, a portrait of a tough looking laborer proudly wearing the socialist slogan *Workers of the World Unite* beneath a Soviet sickle and hammer badge.[58]

Generally, 'tactful persuasion' was applied to censor antagonistic elements in murals, however, in this case the response was much more severe. PWAP's head administrator, Edward Bruce, fired off numerous letters decrying propagandist content saying that the murals "Smacked of Rivera" and communism. The San Francisco Chronicle attacked the project as 'red propaganda.' Wright, who had been the focus of these accusations for the most

part, was particularly vocal in his defense of the mural work arguing that the project depicted the American scene as one of social change, an important and paramount issue in American at the time. It was not long before local and federal officials had echoed similar sentiments.[59] A group, including some local artists, even formed a vigilante squad with the intention to storm the tower and physically chisel off the offensive communist elements. The Union of Artists and Writers picketed around the tower to prevent this and to support the creative freedoms of Wright and the other artists. Divisions grew between the artists involved in the project and across the San Francisco art community more generally. The opening of the towers, originally set for June of 1934, was delayed for months as the media and officials pressured the mural program and its artists to make changes to their work and remove the 'radical' elements.[60] Eventually, by late October 1934 the tower was opened to the public with only Howard's and Wight's murals having been altered, the sickle and hammer banner and reference to *The Western Worker* white washed.[61]

The Coit Tower controversy had shown officials that if they wanted to control artists' social and political tendencies then they had to enforce a more "rigid system of aesthetic watchdogging" and adopt strategies of avoidance to limit negative publicity.[62] This was likely the reason the PWAP was succeeded by the FAP in July 1934 which instituted a more comprehensive management structure. Edward Bruce and his deputy Edward Rowan, who were appointed to carry on the mural program through the FAP were known to have sent numerous letters criticising the artist's approaches and directing them towards FAP standards. They were even known to have made personal visits to the participating artists in their studios while they were painting to oversee and direct them towards finishing their work.[63]

New Deal murals following the Coit Tower project were stringently sanitized of any provocative content. This was particularly so for local post office murals. Regional competitions were regularly held with strict guidelines and content direction. Interpretation was allowed but murals could not be politicized, and had to be related to past or present local history, industry, or culture. Artists were routinely advised to visit the communities they were painting for in order to acquire a better sense of their architecture, local culture, important landmarks, and overall tastes. This became an issue when mostly northern artists were appointed to paint for southern public buildings. Northern artists rarely made the effort to visit the communities they were painting for and instead painted panels in their studios and had them sent to the locations where they would be installed. More often than not, artists were typically chosen on the merit of their pictorial work rather than their knowledge of

local customs and cultural attitudes.[64] This led to a number of cases where southerners objected to the appropriateness of the decorations. Southern artists were still struggling for recognition and patronage from the federal government when these mural programs were instituted and there was little support for the arts in southern states. Many in the south resented the implementation of a public arts project that was largely controlled by Northern interests and saw it as part of a larger project of 'gentle reconstruction.' Inaccuracies and misrepresentations in the portrayals of local history, customs, and industries were likely taken as a disregard and disrespect of southern culture and identity. [65]

The dispute over a mural by Stefan Hirsch, *Justice as Protector and Avenger, (fig. 1.9)* set to be installed in an Aiken, South Carolina courthouse in 1938 was probably the most serious controversy regarding a mural for any post office or courtroom. Like many northern artists, Hirsh had done little to connect with the local community or courthouse before commencing his mural project. He completed it in New York City and then had it shipped to Aiken. When Hirsh arrived he was met with hostility and furor over the mural he had intended to install.[66] Apparently Judge Myers had not been notified that his courtroom was to be the site for this mural decoration and upon seeing the intended mural he fervently denied its installation. The central figure was Lady Justice raising a

Figure 1.9: *Justice as Protector and Avenger*, Stefan Hirsch, Aiken, South Carolina. 1938. Photo by Carol M Highsmith (2016)

nurturing hand to be the virtuous or deserving to her left, and warding off the unworthy or undeserving to her right. Myers called the mural a monstrosity because the Lady Justice was 'mulatto' which was not a befitting symbol to represent justice. He ordered it to be covered from public view. Eventually the NAACP stepped in and the judge modified his initial claim instead saying that the depiction of Justice as an avenger promoted vigilantism and was therefore unfit to be a symbol for a federal courthouse. Apparently,

Rowan had dispatched a personal and confidential letter to the treasury department attesting that the model of Lady Justice in the mural was, in fact, his distinguished and Caucasian wife, even though this was not the case. He also visited the courtroom in January of 1940 to make an official report on the matter, however, his report did little to support the artist or address the controversial and shifting position of Judge Myers. In the end he authorized the purchase of a tan velvet curtain with a draw string which would cover it during courtroom sessions. Hirsch never returned to Aiken and did not repaint his mural, apparently on the advice of Judge Myers.[67]

This would not be the final dispute which came out of the New Deal mural programs before they were closed up in 1943 but it, along with the Coit Tower controversy, were the most high profile and publicized. Public funding and interest in muralism in North America would subside over the next 25 years and it would not be until the mid to the late 1960s when it would again be embraced by socially or politically motivated activists and artists.

The Civil Rights Movement and Community Muralism

Public funding of the arts declined in the late 1930s and 40s as more resources were put to the war effort remaining low well into the late 1950s. The decline of the post WWII economy by the mid-1960s began to reveal some serious contradictions of new capitalist consumer society. The ideal of the American Dream was not attainable for many, especially poor, marginalized, and minority communities who had little opportunity or resources to act, create, and express themselves. Waves of social unrest and mass protest were springing up across the United Sates in response to the decline of traditional American values and the increasingly squalid conditions of cities. The civil rights movement which emerged from this was marked by the struggle for equality, freedom of expression and the demand for revolutionary change. Integration based politics evolved into Black Liberation and the empowerment of the marginalized who alliance with working class and student's rights groups further diffused social protest across the country.[68] The civil rights movement also led to the first great revitalization in North American muralism since the Mexican and American mural projects of the 1920s-1930s. During the civil rights movement collective demonstrations became a form of people's art, a new type of culture which allowed for the direct public communication of suffering and injustice, a "moral appeal" for change.[69] It was a collective, planned and coordinated movement that taught its participants the need for discipline and non-violent tactics. It also popularized the use of visual mediums like posters and props to communicate views,

opinions, and positions.[70] Everyday people were realizing that they could be active creators in this movement and not just a passive audience. Demonstrations were a way for people to act collectively and creatively; an artistic form of collective doing rather than the individual making of art. The demonstration was not just a platform or instrument of change, *it was the change*, a way for people to organize and act collectively, "demonstrations reawakened ordinary people's awareness that, if there ever were to be serious change, they would have to make it themselves and together."[71]

This move towards radical politics and the empowerment of marginalized or oppressed groups had an "electrifying impact"[72] on artists and intellectuals, and found a visual form of expression in the painting of community murals. Artists began working together to design and execute murals with the assistance of non-professional local residents from the community. Public demonstrations were largely the principle imagery of these murals, which also provided lasting statements for the growing rights movement: "art became the expression of their politics, which became the enacting of moral and social convictions."[73] Thus, community muralism became the platform employed in neglected working class and marginalised neighborhoods to celebrate cultural and historical figures or themes largely ignored by the mainstream media and the state. Social and political activism also grew more deeply integrated with artistic practices through this process. For the first time, there were also leading roles for artists who came from marginalized groups and ethnicities (Women, Black, Asian, and Latino, even those from the emerging punk scene) as creative directors, managers and administrators for mural projects. Murals became important markers in the community as well as sites where people organised, read poetry, demonstrated, and talked politics.

In these ways the civil rights movement of the 1950s-60s was responsible for reinvigorating the interest and pursuit of muralism as a *socially and politically committed art*. The civil rights movement helped to (re)establish a public audience for muralism as a visual expression of social and political struggle, not only *for* the masses but *with* them. The community was more than just an audience, they were active participants in the mural movement, invested in the creation and preservation of wall paintings as a public good:

> …community residents have celebrated, loved, and protected [murals] because they have had a part in them. They have seen images of their humanity reflected in the murals. The murals have told the people's story, their history and struggles, their dignity and hopes.[74]

Artists still felt the need to break with the institutions, studios and museums of elitist culture; to make a public statement with their art and a direct connection with oppressed groups and neglected

communities. Unlike the artists whom they proceeded, the mural painters of this period did not receive formal academic instruction or training in fresco or classical methods and they did not travel to Europe or Mexico to learn from or paint with masters of the art form. They lacked the level of funding and institutional support that the great muralists before them had and so needed to forge those relationships themselves. Artists began to question and analyze their roles and the relationship of the arts with bourgeois society. A split developed between those who wanted to fight for artist's rights in the art world and those who wanted to go beyond to participate in the movements for equality and change at home and abroad.[75]

The Walls of Respect, Truth, Dignity, and Pride

On a hot summer night in 1967, on the corner of Langley Avenue and 43rd Street, in the heart of Chicago's Black Belt[76], over a dozen artists, poets, painters, writers, and photographers, including Eugene Eda and prominent poet Haki Madhubuti, came together to create the *Wall of Respect (fig. 1.10)*. The corner had previously been a thriving economic location of the community but had in recent years come to be dominated by gang activity and crime.[77] The building was abandoned and had been slated for redevelopment. Without consent, community artists re-appropriated the façade of the building and painted a mural. The Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) was the main sponsor of the wall and William Walker, one of the organizations founding members, coordinated the project. The visual language was distinctly African American with a

Figure 1.10: *The Wall of Respect*, Chicago 1967.

focus on African civilizations, community figures, and notable people of color whom the artists believed could help to instill pride in their communities. The 20 by 60 foot mural was compositionally a montage of posters, enlarged photos, and painted figures of Black heroes and heroines such as Malcom X, Gwendolyn Brooks, Elijah Muhammed, Martin Luther King Jr., Aretha Franklin, Muhammed

Ali, and W.E.B. Dubois.[78] This wall was significant because it was the first collectively produced street mural, and "it established two genres of painting that were to be widely followed –portraits of past and present ethnic heroes and symbolic or narrative scenes of climatic events in ethnic history."[79] The wall not only became a totem of local identity but a leading example of how to bring art and activism together in a community context. Even gang members considered it neutral space and helped the artists locate materials and secure the location. Importantly, the mural continued to be a source of inspiration, art, and activism after its completion. Activists came to speak, read poetry, hold political gatherings, and play music well after it had been finished. The mural essentially magnetized the community to come together to discuss and confront major social, political, and moral issues surrounding the civil rights movement, including racism, community rights, and urban renewal.

That same year, just across the street, Walker and Eda began organizing and painting their second mural, *The Wall of Truth (fig. 1.11),* which depicted similar cultural themes with figures of the

Figure 1.11: A group of African American men gather around the *Wall of Truth*, Chicago, circa 1969-1971.

Black community. This mural was also painted without permission on an unused section of commercial property. A sign over a doorway on the wall read: "We the People of this community claim this building in order to preserve what's ours." One year later, *The East Side Voice* invited Walker and Eda to paint a mural in Detroit. On the corner of Mack Avenue near Fairview in the city's East Side[80] they painted *The Wall of Dignity* on a one-storey brick wall of a skating rink and wrestling hall which had suffered fire damage in the riots the year prior.[81] The mural included portraits of Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Nigerian royalty, scenes from Egypt and other parts

of Africa. Soon after, Walker and Eda were invited to paint a second mural in Detroit, *The Wall of Pride*, on the Grace Escopal Church near the epicenter of the riots. This wall explored similarities of cultural experience between the Israelites and Black American experiences of liberation from bondage and oppression.

The community discussions and debates at *The Wall of Respect* were not always amendable and with some OBAC artists, locals, even some gang members, taking issue with some of the mural content. The Black Power and Liberation movement was still growing and maturing which caused some divides between supporters of integrationist policies and separatist politics. This led to the removal of Martin Luther King Jr.'s portrait as some considered him not to be radical enough and images of KKK members and police brutalizing Black people that some argued were too extreme.[82] This contention also made *The Wall of Respect* an organic project with changes taking place throughout the time it existed. Various portraits, poems, and scenes were added and removed as events in the Black community and the civil rights movement unfolded. Sadly, a fire of unknown origins[83] in 1971 destroyed the mural.[84] Soon afterwards, the city of Chicago demolished the entire area and set it for redevelopment. The few remaining sections and panels from the Wall of Truth were eventually installed at Malcom and College Street in the Westside of the City.

The Artists' Statement: A New Mural Manifesto

The Walls of Respect, Truth, Dignity, and Pride had catalyzed the mural movement like a "spark setting off a prairie fire."[85] By the mid-1970s Chicano, White, Black, and Asian artists were organizing mural projects in communities in over a dozen cities across the United States. Wall painting in communities was becoming an emerging and "conscious multi-national movement of artists who now began to call themselves muralists."[86] As well, local governments had taken notice and were offering funding for community murals under the direction of local artists from a wide variety of ethnic groups and backgrounds. In Chicago alone, there had been 30 murals completed in the three years since the *Wall of Respect*. The Walls of Truth, Respect, Dignity, Pride and Understanding which were painted from Chicago to Detroit as well as the mural programs in New York City helped to unify artists and activists in ways which had not been imagined since the Mexican mural movement. Street and mural arts helped to articulate their ideas and visions to a public audience who in turn joined into conversation with the artists about civil rights, fair representation, Black history, communities, and hope for a better future. This was a *people's art on public walls* which engendered a stronger sense of

community and civic responsibilities by creating a living relationship between artists and the people it was meant for. Community murals quickly took hold and grew in popularity because they were relevant to the people, their problems, hopes, and aspirations. These murals reflected the people's history and stories, and did so with pride, respect, and dignity. This recognition was essential to community muralism's success as a truly public art and in its emancipatory capacity to lift people above their struggls.

These ideals were probably best articulated in *The Artists' Statement*, a mural movement manifesto written by Walker, Eda, and fellow artists and activists, Mark Rogovin and John Weber in the spring of 1971. During *Murals for the People*, a month long exhibit at the Chicago MCA (Museum of Contemporary Art) in 1971,[87] mural panels by these artists were executed and on display, the statement was distributed to museum attendees. Each of the artists had painted a mural panel on location in the museum gallery throughout the month long exhibit, after which the murals would be installed in neighborhoods throughout the city.[88] *The Artist's Statement* was the first mural manifesto to be written since Siqueiros had issued his some fifty years prior. Walker, Eda, Rogovin, and Weber wrote the manifesto together at the South Side Community Art Center earlier that year which expressed their commitment and desire to create socially conscious and relevant public art. It declared that art was meant to be a medium to "dethrone ignorance from its pedestal of influence in the affairs of man" and to be "a universal language." Murals were to be emancipatory in that they were intended to "speak to an end of war, racism, and repression, of love, of beauty, and of life…to restore an image of full humanity to the people, to peace art into its true context –into life."[89] This was a major statement that these artists were making about muralism and the social (human) project it was meant to serve. Moreover, Rogovin had painted with and learned under Siqueiros in Mexico City for the Polyforum Project in the summers of 1965 and 1966 for the *March of Humanity* mural. It would be Siqueiros' influence which would instil in Rogovin the critical importance of muralism as a public art and bring him into contact with Walker, Eda, and the other artist's associated with OBAC in Chicago several years later.[90] Rogovin would also go one to co-author *Mural Manual* (1973) and *Silhouette Murals* (1976), which both outline how to organize and paint community murals, and the techniques and practices associated with the creation of socially relevant and conscious art.

The MCA exhibition was an opportunity for these streets-based artists to connect to Chicago's business and higher arts communities but it also presented an ideological dilemma. Walker and his group were committed to creating community art and the MCA represented the private art and commercial market which was largely elitist. They

managed to secure an agreement with the MCA with two important caveats: first, members of the communities in which their murals were to be installed at a later date would have free access to the museum and the exhibit, and second, their work would not be censured by the museum administration. Even more, the artists did not attend the opening of the exhibit, but instead held a press conference afterwards during which they released *The Artists' Statement* to a wider audience.[91]

As community muralism continued to gain increasing popularity throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it seemed that the hopes and aspirations of *The Artists' Statement* were taking hold. Muralists and communities began reaching out to municipal governments, museums, schools, libraries, and other local and federal institutions for funding opportunities and wall spaces to carry out mural projects.[92] Even with this growing support for the mural arts in the United States, there were still issues of censorship that artists and organizations had to contend with from their funding agencies. Besides creative and ideological differences between the artists, those with the organizational bureaucracy of the supporting organizations were invested in keeping their programs running as well maintaining their jobs. Therefore, overly radical, political, or otherwise controversial material was being slowly worked out in favor of more general and aesthetic elements. For instance, in 1977 the Illinois Arts Council refused to fund any Chicago mural groups on "the grounds that social action was incompatible with art"[93] and began dropping artists from the program or 'cycling' them out in favor of others more in line with their vision. This was especially the case if the murals contained any religious or political content. These programs also re-instituted the requirement of providing a sketch or mock-up of the mural intended to be painted prior to any approval or release of funding. In many ways state sponsored mural programs of the 1970s and 1980s seemed to be adopting similar approaches to bureaucratic oversight and management that the New Deal era mural arts programs had enforced. Still, artists and activist groups continued organizing to preserve the community and political underpinnings of these projects. As well, more radical artistic practices like graffiti and street art began to emerge which operated more clandestinely and aggressively in taking space and which did not agree to be bound by any institutional controls.

Graffiti and the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program

Alongside these developments in the mural arts *graffiti* also began to appear as disaffected and disenfranchised youth in in New York City, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia (and others) also took the initiative to leave their marks on the city, but in a much more aggressive manner. Although the mural arts provided a positive and

enriching experience for youth in these same communities, there were many who were unsatisfied with these outlets and sought a more direct approach to expressing themselves. Using aerosol spray paint and markers, youth in these cities wrote their names without permission on city surfaces, at first on subway cars and then inner city walls. Names such as Cornbread, Taki183, Dondi, Lady Pink, and Iz the Wiz, quickly rose in prominence and notoriety as graffiti writing diffused throughout the United States and into Canada in the 1970s and early 1980s. By the mid-1980s graffiti had become synonymous with inner city neighborhoods and was considered to be symptomatic of more widespread criminal activity and urban decay. Cities such as Philadelphia, New York City, and Los Angeles had so much graffiti that it was considered to be a major social problem. Broken windows policing strategies and zero tolerance policies along with special task forces –so called graffiti squads – were adopted by city governments in an effort to reduce and eradicate graffiti.[94]

It is not surprising then that one of the most successful community based mural arts programs in the United States –the Mural Arts Program (MAP) of Philadelphia –developed out of these circumstances. In 1970 the Philadelphia Museum of Art established the Department of Urban Outreach (DUO) which focused on mural painting in neighborhoods though out the city. Close to one hundred murals were painted during its period of operation which encouraged neighborhood pride, reduced graffiti, and beautified communities.[95] The Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network (PAGN) was founded in 1984 in response to neighborhood blight and rampant graffiti writing. The MAP was a branch of the PAGN which hired a young muralist named Jane Golden to connect with and attempt to redirect the energies of local young graffiti writers into more constructive arts projects. "Mural painting provided a support structure for these young men and women to develop their artistic skills, empowering them to take on an active role in beautifying their neighborhoods and communities."[96] Meg Saligman's[97] *Common Threads (fig. 1.12)* is emblematic of the type of community based muralism that the MAP has championed in Philadelphia and remains one of the city's most iconic artistic landmarks today. Located on the west wall of the Stevens Administrative Center measuring 8 story's high and covering nearly 7500 square feet, it is also one of the earliest monumental community murals ever produced in North America. Saligman based the main characters in the mural on antique figures owned by her grandmother which she mirrored with portraits of students from two local high schools. The figures and students are painted in heroic poses, represent mixed ethnicities, and together reflect the shared humanity over the passage of time between generations. In 2011 the mural was restored after significant weather

damage over the years and has since been re-commemorated by Golden, Saligman, and the MAP.[98]

By 1990 the popularity of Golden's program and approach had gained support not just from the municipal government but from the graffiti writing subculture as well. Hundreds of local writers would go on to attend mural painting courses through the program and then use their newfound skills and knowledge to paint murals throughout the city. In 1996 the City of Philadelphia recognized the MAP as a distinct and separate program and it established a non-profit organization, the Philadelphia Mural Arts Advocates (PMAA), dedicated to the youth outreach and neighborhood revitalization through streets-based and mural arts. Since then the MAP has continued to work with Philadelphia communities focusing on art education, community mural making, prevention and rehabilitation, and public engagement. With over 4000 wall paintings having been commissioned over the years through the MAP, Philadelphia has come to be known as America's city of murals.[99]

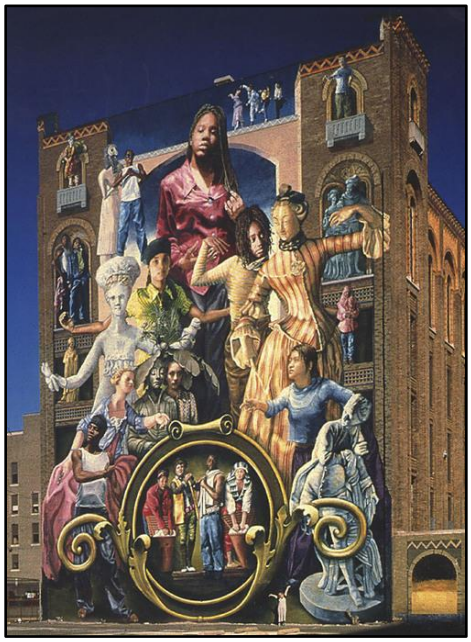

Figure 1.12: *Common Threads*, Meg Saligman. Philadelphia, PA. 1998.

Public Art, Private Interests

Some sponsors saw the growing popularity of mural arts as an opportunity to use murals as an alternative strategy to enliven and beautify inner city areas for publicly and privately funded small-scale urban transformations. In New York City this approach led to the incorporation of the first mural painting company, City Walls Inc. in 1967. David Bromberg, a young and ambitious urban engineer, contacted the artist Allan D'Arcangelo to paint a multi-storey mural on a wall in a semi-abandoned locale in the Lower East Side in conjunction with the planned vest-pocket park for the location. This was the first time that a sponsor had contacted a property owner for the express purpose of painting a mural for an urban project.[100] It would set a precedent which future projects would adopt to secure permissions to paint murals on a number of other properties in the Lower East Side and across the city.

D'Arcangelo's untitled massive abstract mural *(fig. 1.13)* visually interrupted the bland cityscape providing:

> a temporary burst of color in an otherwise neutral (if not darkened) site that also transformed this otherwise nondescript location into a minor local landmark. As a new site of distinction, the mural quickly generated interest, due to its location and affective potential.[101]

Building owners, realizing the potential to enhance the value of their properties, started contacting organizations like City Walls Inc. to organize similar mural projects. Several multi-storey abstract murals followed that year by artists such as Jason Crum, Nassos Daphnis, and Robert Wiegand. These murals would come to be known as *supergraphics*, blown-up abstract art pieces which provided color and enlivened neighborhood walls. Supergraphics became popular in the lower east side due to blight and neglect. Property owners who were less interested in improving the conditions of their buildings were quick to support such noncontroversial mural projects as they provided a cheap and quick solution to 'brightening up the neighborhood.'

Corporations were also beginning to see the value of appropriating these platforms to reach their consumer audiences. For example, Exxon, one of the largest corporate donors of Cityarts put out two articles in 1973 and 1974 on the mural movement in the United States, the first concerning Black and the second on Chicano wall paintings. Although they did well enough to discuss the value of community muralism, they also appropriated the movement and its message. As Barnett points out:

> Such undertakings projected the image of one of the largest corporations in the world as a firm that nonetheless was concerned about ordinary people and the uplifting of community life. It was difficult not to interpret this as its using the mural movement to legitimize its power. (1984: 434)

While property owners were trying to use muralism to modify public perceptions of the quality of their properties, corporations were similarly engaged in their efforts to use the mural arts to enhance their brands' familiarity with younger demographics.

Throughout the 1970s supergraphics were increasingly a solution that property owners and municipalities were gravitating towards. By 1978 City Walls Inc. had completed over 50 commissions in the New York area and had also consulted in a number of other American cities. Crum and other artists argued that their art was beautifying and re-establishing human interaction to the lived experience of the city. Community muralists countered that commissioned supergraphics did little to generate a sense of civic pride or engagement. Supergraphics were not created in collaboration with neighborhood and community members had no

input or involvement in their design or production. They were imposed just like any other billboard on the urban horizon. These murals were meant to engage viewers on a purely sensory rather than social level, offering only a temporary and passive form of visual entertainment. At best, supergraphics were pleasurable and colorful distractions, "a cosmetic papering over the deep-seated urban problems that cry out to be expressed and solved."[102] This marked an important shift in the ways in which muralism was being mobilized in American cities. Community actors and muralists found themselves increasingly having to struggle to get funding and support that enterprises like City Walls Inc. continued to secure from private patrons, corporations, and agencies. Corporately funded so-called public murals continued to be criticised as being merely decorative and a waste of time and money compared to the socially oriented and culturally grounded work they were trying to continue in marginalized and at-risk neighborhoods.

Figure 1.13: *Untitled mural* by Allan D'Arcangelo, Lower East Side, NYC, 1968. Photo by Andrew Russeth.

The issue of co-option began to take on greater weight as the mural movement grew and expanded in its involvement in community matters and politics. Concerns of co-option by institutional and corporate interests figured prominently in decisions to accept sponsorship from firms that artists knew were exploiting people. This presented a new challenge to artists, activists, and mural arts groups as government and corporate entities alike were increasingly applying monetary and bureaucratic restraints complicating both the process and the message of mural arts. This opposition between community and commercially oriented muralists would continue to grow and set the tone for the next generation of streets-based artists.

Murals for or by the People?

Ultimately what is at stake is the kinds of public spaces and public art we are making in democratic societies today and whether they are truly serving public interests or those of the economic and

political elite. Muralism as a public art throughout the first half of the 20th century was a site where *politics* and the *political* were played out between artists, the state, and the public. Mexican muralism of the 1920s and that in the USA 1930s established public art programs ostensibly meant to grow muralism as an *art of the people* but were actually meant just to be *art for the people.* These programs were not established to genuinely enrich people's lives but to legitimate the power of the status quo by molding a national consciousness that was largely in line with the socio-political and economic agendas of the elite. The Mexican muralists engaged with social and political protest in their own ways through their muralism –Orozco subtly, Rivera provocatively, and Siqueiros radically. Although their efforts were largely sanitized by the state, they were able to transmit the philosophical and artistic tools to the next generation. Their American counterparts continued these protestations and were also met with significant opposition from government managed programs and the political far right. It would be the following generation of artists and muralists who embraced these ideals by putting them into practice with community oriented mural projects. The artists of the 1960s and 1970s made bold moves to appropriate pubic space to make social and political claims, utilizing muralism as a site from which to disseminate and develop a discourse of resistance.

The Mexican and American examples clearly display how early muralists made concerted efforts to make their art a space of power, conflict and antagonism both at the wall and more generally as a philosophy. These early muralists were moved to articulate those philosophies in the form of manifestos which declared the social and political intentions of the muralists, that muralism should be a public art representative of the people and their struggles, and that art should enlighten the public and uplift humanity. Indeed, these manifestos declared not only that public art needed to be socially and politically relevant, but that those who took up the service of painting murals as a public art had an obligation to engage with politics, to antagonise the status quo, and to be *political*. At the same time, state *politics* have repeatedly imposed regulative measures to contain and sublimate this antagonism, attempting to fashion artists and muralism as an instrument of deliberative or universal consensus, devoid of controversial content. As the following chapters will discuss, muralism continues to be a site of critical artistic practice but artists and their projects have increasingly had to struggle with co-option by government and commercial interests. At the same time, collective struggles have diminished in strength owing to the rise of neoliberal and consumer ideals which place emphasis on individual autonomy, self-interest, fulfilment through material accumulation, and the pursuit of personal wealth. Artists no longer

organize like they did in previous generations, focusing instead on localised mural arts projects or developing their individual brands and arts careers. Artists still paint for events and sell their art to help raise awareness about important issues, work and collaborate with local communities and do youth outreach, but very few are truly political in their work such as the artists discussed in this chapter.

One measure of this diminished collective strength within the mural arts is the notable absence of manifestos like those produced by the Mexican and American muralists in previous generations by artists or groups in graffiti and street art today. When manifestos are produced they tend to be declarations of individual artistic work and intent which may connect to larger social, political, cultural, and environmental issues but they do not invoke a collective response or plan or action. For example, Sheppard Fairey, easily one of the most popular American street artist's, has a manifesto from 1990 which states no serious intention except for reviving a sense of wonder and curiosity in the urban environment. He states that his OBEY sticker campaign and overall mission behind his street art is an experiment in phenomenology meant to make the observer question their relationship to their surrounding environment, including the imposed visual order of advertising and commercial signage. Manifestos like this, which more accurately could be called mission statements, also tend to focus on the mandates specific to an individual, community or cause and do not attempt to make connections to larger movements or discourses beyond the scope of their particular projects. Social and political underpinnings still drive many artists to connect with communities and raise awareness to important societal problems, however, these projects have become increasingly individual in scope and focused on specific locales and issues rather than connecting to collective struggles and identities.

The following chapter continues this discussion by exploring how the emergence of graffiti and street art in the late 1960s and early 1970s reinvigorated the social and political spirit in the mural arts. Situated in my ethnographic work with writers and artists, graffiti and street art are positioned as counter hegemonic practices offering alternative pathways for lifestyle, career success, and modes of critical artistic intervention. Persistent antagonisms between graffiti and street artists, however, have limited their range of meaningful interactions with each other and capacity to create a more unifying and collective movement. Moreover, constraints, restrictions, and censorships also continue to be imposed on those who do not conform to regulative and bureaucratic systems of management and control. How graffiti and street artists support or resist these attempts to sublimate their counter hegemonic practices finds articulation through informal and formal strategies of career development and systems of aesthetic regulation.

II
Street Art Muralism: Sublimating the Radicality of Street-based Arts

Graffiti is like…let's say art is spaghetti, graffiti is fuckin' tabasco. It's spicy, edgy, [and] it's in your face. *C'est ne pas gentile*. It's not there to please everyone. That's the difference between street art and graffiti. Street art tries to please, graffiti tries to disturb. It's in your face. (Axe)

Where we're going, we don't need rogues…

The previous chapter discussed the social and political roots of North American muralism and how street art emerged out of the late 1960s and early 1970s as a mode of community based muralism and activism in the United States. A visual expression of the civil rights movement, street art helped to give voice and representation to marginalized communities and to enact claims for equality and social justice. Street artists also began pursuing illicit applications of their work adopting the modus operandi of graffiti by aggressively taking space in the city. The illegal turn for street art was also as a reaction to the commercial cooption of community muralism in the early 1970s and the expansion of consumer culture more generally. As signature graffiti[103] and street art developed into the 1980s and 1990s, both would engage in counter hegemonic projects, but from different positions. While the often cryptic style and form of signature graffiti was meant primarily for the appreciation of subcultural peers, those who pursued it seriously as an art and a vocation, painting canvasses and graffiti murals, could also gain public recognition as artists. Conversely, street artists were specifically targeting public audiences using a wider spectrum of communicable elements from playful articulations with urban architecture to cultural and socio-political statements. Although community muralism continued to be practiced, the new generation of street artists began focusing more on putting up specific anti-capitalist messages and images, and working clandestinely in the streets like their graffiti writing counterparts. Accordingly, graffiti art and muralism developed as alternative pathways towards civic engagement and ownership, while street art developed into a popular mode of critical artistic intervention.

By the mid to late 2000s heroic and monumental applications of graffiti and street art were also becoming popularized through urban arts festivals and mural arts programs in Europe and North America. As these festivals and programs became standardized solutions to reinvigorating local commerce and beautifying city space, *street art muralism* –the formal organization and management of street art under municipal mural arts programs and urban arts festivals –would

emerge as the dominant visual artistic expression in many North American cities. Graffiti and street art are still quite visible and popular, but street art muralism has eclipsed them in terms of scale and popular public perception. The next chapter takes a closer look at the formal integration of street art muralism into creative city discourses and urban branding strategies in North America and how this has exacerbated tensions between graffiti and street artists surrounding claims to authenticity and place in the city. This chapter examines how the counter hegemonic practices engendered in the social organization of graffiti subculture and the street art community have been diminished with the rise of street art muralism as the dominant and popular visual artistic expression in North America. Similar to the efforts by government and corporate interests in the first half of the 20th century to silence the social protests and political antagonisms of the Mexican and American muralists, the formal organization of street art muralism is understood here as extending strategies of control and management implemented by neoliberal forces to pacify the radical uncertainties and antagonisms presented by graffiti and street art.

The Antagonism of Streets-based Arts

Following the conceptualization of hegemony by Mouffe and Laclau (1985), further articulated in Mouffe's continued discussions on agonistic politics (2007, 2013, 2018) society (the social) is understood as a privileged discursive space where all relations of representation are made possible and are constituted around antagonistic limits. Western neoliberal societies have made extreme efforts to remove opposition from political discourse in favor of universal consensus. Identifying social antagonisms, then, are central to any re-articulation of political frontiers and the reformulation of the present hegemonic order. Graffiti and street art are positioned here as discursive antagonisms which challenge the dominant neoliberal hegemony through forms of artistic and social critique. Graffiti is antagonistic in that it illegally takes space and subverts existing signage in the city. It also opposes the status quo through artistic critique in how writers and artists adhere to alternative value systems engendered through subcultural social organization and the pursuit of unconventional forms of living and work. Street art can be understood as a form of social critique that also takes space illegally but does so with the aim of engaging with public audiences on a critical level by appealing to their moral and affective registers.

In *Agonistics* (2013) Mouffe characterizes critical artistic practices as counter-hegemonic interventions which can occur in a multiplicity of sites (e.g. public, institutional, work place) where social and political alternatives can be visualized to reveal what the

dominant consensus either obscures or obliterates. These counter-hegemonic interventions can be effective on any terrain but are still dependent on the exposure an artist receives and their ability to communicate their work effectively. Graffiti and street art are excellent candidates for creating new sites for critical artistic interventions as each occurrence (e.g. sticker, tag, wheat paste, piece, or mural) is a site onto itself reconfiguring place and space in the city and offering alternative perspectives. Public space is where the dominant hegemonic order attempts to create consensus and where differing views and voices come together and confront each other. Critical artistic interventions which visualize alternatives become important, if not crucial, sites for social critique by instigating conversations around different perspectives and ideas.

As a concept, artistic critique originated in 19th century bohemian resistance to bourgeois elitism. It has recently been mobilized by Boltanski and Chiapello in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005) to refer to the adoption of a lifestyle of uncertainty as an emancipatory mechanism to free the individual from the exploitive and alienating conditions of new capitalist society. Graffiti writers and artists approach this uncertain and nomadic lifestyle in terms of pursuing a multiplicity of lives (subcultural and conventional identities), rejecting pre-conceived or expected life plans, refusing membership to elite societal groups, and expressing an unwillingness to engage with institutional frameworks. It is to these uncertain or indeterminate qualities, particularly in the lifestyles of graffiti artists and muralists in how they relate to and are shaped by subcultural relations and organization, that artistic critique informs these counter-hegemonic projects.

Hebdige (1979) posited that hegemonic struggles are always as much struggles within signification (the possession of signs) as they are struggles between discourses, definitions, and meanings within ideology. Signs are important commodities which can be stolen, re-appropriated, and imbued with both legitimate and illegitimate uses by subordinate groups who encode secret and subversive meanings in them as a form of resistance to the dominant hegemony. Graffiti and street art are oppositional and antagonistic signs in that they are transgressive re-significations which challenge existing uses and conceptions of public space. Even without any context, graffiti and street artists antagonize merely with the improper placement of oppositional signs in public spaces and on private property. Generally viewed as vandalism, graffiti and street art have been chiefly defined as deliberate actions meant to damage or destroy property, one of the core elements of capitalism. In this sense then graffiti and street art approach counter hegemonic practice as "gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion,

which contradicts the myth of consensus."[104] Although neither is capable of *dismantling* hegemonic power alone, graffiti and street art do provide a means by which practitioners can challenge dominantly held assumptions, beliefs, and established patterns of behaviour.

The Social Organization of Graffiti Writers and Street Artists

Graffiti writing continues to predominantly be a youth and male dominated subculture, although there are increasingly more females and older practitioners. Still, only two of my participants were female. Although almost all of my interviewees mentioned that there are more females doing graffiti, I was only able to secure two interviews for this research. I did, however, speak informally with at least dozen other women who were involved in both graffiti and street art muralism while in the field in Montreal and Miami. Graffiti writers also still begin doing graffiti at a young age, usually during adolescence between the ages of 12 to 14 years. Almost all of the participating graffiti writers in this research indicated that this was the case for them. Several told me that they only began doing graffiti in their mid to later teen years. Previous literature has shown that graffiti writers do not typically continue doing graffiti beyond their mid to late 20s,[105] however, the writers that I have followed over the last decade are still practicing graffiti in some form are well into their mid to later 30s and some into their 40s.

Many of these older and established writers that I interviewed for my Master's research (Murray 2010) have continued to paint but have transitioned to legal forms of painting as graffiti muralists in Montreal and abroad, some professionally even. As they have matured and aged, there are a number of graffiti writers and street artists who now have children and families. Zek, for instance, has 4 children, all boys, the oldest in his young teens and the youngest a few years old. Scien and Klor are a couple and also have children. Jason Botkin has a young son and Fluke recently welcomed his first child in early 2020, as did Kevin Ledo. Indeed their decision to pursue more legally oriented forms of graffiti and street art muralism as well as working for professionally established arts companies or developing their own was influenced heavily by having children and the need to support their families. Lifestyles of risk and infamy are not conducive to the type of stability and presence needed of fathers and mothers and getting caught for doing illegal painting on the streets could result in fines or jail time taking them away from these responsibilities.

This transition of graffiti writers to artists has also been seen in New York City in the work by Snyder (2009) and Kramer (2010). Both of these researchers describe legitimate applications of graffiti art as 'legal graffiti' and that this subset of actors represents a

growing subcultural demographic. Although their work does well to describe the changing nature of permission and commission graffiti walls and some of the social relations which surround the production of legal graffiti, they do not account for the more recent emergence of street art muralism and how its growing popularity has come to impact relationship dynamics in the subculture. Both of these authors do well to describe and analyze the changing characteristics of the subculture and acknowledge the relevancy of legal applications of graffiti art, however, they are specific to New York City. In looking at other cities like Miami, Los Angeles, Montreal and Toronto we widen the scope of inquiry and provide material for comparative analysis. As well, graffiti artists who pursue legitimate applications of graffiti art most likely have backgrounds in graffiti writing so it is important not to disregard that aspect of their development. Moreover, while some writers and artists pursue legitimate applications of graffiti there remain many active writers on the illegal side of the streets. Pursuing both legal and illegal careers is a precarious balancing act and only few are able to do so with the greatest success. In Montreal one of the most successful graffiti artist's to do so was Scan, considered by many to be one of the most talented, dedicated, and capable graffiti writers and artists in the subculture.[106]

Although there are also a wide range of cultural identities in graffiti and street art, with many having minority ethnic backgrounds, in Montreal there remains an overwhelming representation of white Quebecois over all other groups. Given the range of ethnic and national identities among graffiti and street artists generally across the subculture, there is a great deal of cultural variety in the pieces, productions, and murals that they paint. This can be evidenced in how writers and artists will include shout outs and messages to fellow writers and crews, both supportive and oppositional, as well as references to cultural figures, holidays, and historical events. The cultural influences of American graffiti and hip hop, however, tend to dominate how graffiti writers and street artists speak about graffiti and street art culture. For instance, the act of doing graffiti –to bomb or go bombing –is an American import that has become popularized among local Montreal writers as much as others in North American and European cities. For the most part, the French speaking writers of Montreal have adopted the English terms like flop (throw up), tag, roller, and bombing, however, it should be noted that the French terms ted to be similarly pronounced, such as 'tague' or 'bombe'. The term 'toy' is similarly employed by French and English speaking writers and artists alike to refer to a novice graffiti writer who possesses little skill or style yet and thus has little respect among those who are more established. Still, there are some terms that French speaking Quebecoise graffiti writers and

artists employ interchangeably, such as the term 'King' –meant as a title of respect for the best and most prolific of graffiti writers. French speaking Quebecoise writers and artists will also use the term 'chef', loosely translated meaning 'chief', used to denote a writer of high status in the community. Usually it is written in such phrases as "Le chefs," "Les vrais chefs," "Les grandes chefs" accompanying pieces and productions by crews of local writers. Often Chef is used as a title of respect when speaking about writers and artists like Scan, Zek or Stare. Other examples of interchangeable and similarly sounding terms used would be those for a graffiti writer –tageur, graffer, or graffiteur –but often these are substituted for writer or artist.

Montreal graffiti writers tend to be mostly French speaking, young (<30 years old) white males of lower to middle class descent. There is still a significant number of writers that come from lower or working class families, though in the last decade there are increasingly more who either come from middle and even upper middle class backgrounds or have improved the quality of their lifestyles by securing higher paying work. The individuals I have interviewed were all over the age of 18, with the younger graffiti artists like Miss Teri, Awe and Rizek in their young to mid-20s. Established street art muralists typically range between 30 and 45 years of age, with several nearer to 50. My informants were a varied mix of young and old, moderately to highly successful, creatively inclined, and able minded –there was no archetype according to class, age, gender, sex, or ethnicity. During my master's research (Murray 2010) I found that most did not have an education that went beyond high school or CEGEP and were not white collar workers; most were moderately educated, street smart individuals who worked a variety of blue collar jobs or in the service industry such as bartending and waiting or waitressing, while others worked office jobs. Many graffiti writers and artists still remain within this educational spectrum, however, there are a number of whom I have met who have attained or are pursuing bachelor degrees in arts, commerce, and social sciences. More than half of my participants were graffiti writers who had a college level education or higher or were pursuing a higher degree. The pursuit of technical and university degrees has also increased among younger generations of graffiti and street artists. Both Awe and Miss Teri for instance, both completed degrees in visual and fine arts at Concordia University.

The subset of artists that I have been following are older and more established now ten years later and have graduated to higher paying technical and design work for advertising agencies, sign companies, online sales and marketing companies. Some have also secured training in professional trades as plumbers, auto mechanics, electricians, and contractors. Others have taken advantage of online

learning opportunities to improve their work skill sets in order to apply for jobs outside of blue collar or service industries. Some were able to live off of their art like Kevin and Jason, selling cavasses privately and publicly or getting paid contracts for mural work in the city and abroad. While others like Fluke, Scien & Klor, and Senk operate businesses that sell art and locally designed merchandise, rent out work spaces for artists and events, paint murals and produce installations or activations, or help top co-produce urban arts districts and festival events. Fluke's business A'Shop also employs a number of local artists both regularly and for specific projects. Zek, Dodo, Dre, and Five8 all work mostly full time. Axe was also with A'Shop since its initial start but since moved on to pursue his own work in graffiti muralism and art. Otak was also an important part of the A'Shop team for years since its inception but ended up leaving to pursue other work in the arts and music sometime in 2020 or 2021.

Street artists tend to be older, typically in their later twenties to early thirties but there are also many who continue to practice street art well into their 40s and beyond. As street artists developed alongside graffiti writing there are many who have experimented with graffiti before moving into street art. Certainly not all street artists began by doing graffiti. Some also come from institutionally trained fine or performance art backgrounds, possess collegial or undergraduate degrees, and are professionally employed as artists and muralists or in a related fields such as fashion, advertising, or marketing (Phillipe Mastracola, Jason Botkin, and Kevin Ledo all have undergraduate degrees in the arts).

The proportion of women to men is also much higher in street art than in graffiti. Some of the most popular street art practitioners are women, for instance, Swoon, Miss Van, MadC, and Faith47 are known the world over. Like the graffiti subculture, however, street artists appear to still be predominantly male. From my observations at events, festivals, jams, and activations, there were more women street artists present, but they were still less than the men. Street artists, like graffiti writers, also come from a wide variety of ethnic and national backgrounds. Many of the street artists I have met have European upbringings which likely has more to do with Montreal's geographical and cultural proximities than anything else. While I was in Miami for Art Basel in 2016 for instance, I met many graffiti and street artists who came from Mexico and South America and others who had Hispanic and Cuban backgrounds, again likely due to Miami's proximity geographically to these countries as well as Hispanic ethnicities having a deep historical presence in American culture. The street artists who participated in my research identified mainly as French-Canadian but came from a variety of backgrounds like Irish, Scottish, English, German, Polish, Hispanic, Portuguese, Czech and Cambodian.

Graffiti and street artists usually have a studio space where they produce canvass works and other fine arts productions, especially during the winter months of the year. Most of the graffiti and street artists that I have interviewed and followed have a work space in their homes while the more serious artists strive for or have the means to acquire private studio spaces. As mentioned above, street artists are more inclined to group together to share studio spaces to reduce costs, though not always. For instance, I interviewed Kevin at his rented studio space at LiveArt on St. Denis Boulevard in the Plateau Montreal. It was a small, comfortable studio, not entirely spacious but certainly enough for him to get his work done. There was a sink to wash brushes and dishes, and some storage space for other materials. Canvasses were propped up or hanging on the walls in the space, some finished, others still in progress. Five8 has a studio area in his condo apartment where he gets some of his work done if he is not doing a project at another studio space such as at A'Shop. His studio area was one half, maybe two-thirds, of his living room decorated with materials, sketches, and cavasses in various stages of completion. A'Shop has a dedicated studio space and workshop where larger projects and canvasses can be built, designed and painted. Over the course of my research I witnessed a number of local and visiting artists using their workshop area either for individual or collaborative projects. Fluke often remarks with pride how he has been able to grow A'Shop over the last few years to be able to accommodate other artists giving them an opportunity to complete and grow their work as well.

Crews & Collectives

Graffiti writers may remain singular in their activities, but most form into groups called *crews* which usually consist of several or more writers of similar levels of skill, age and regional background. Most often a crew of graffiti writers are friends who know each other from their local neighborhood, area, or school who paint graffiti together. Although not always, crews do tend to form along linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, where writers from same neighborhoods and schools tend to come together. Ethnic and cultural backgrounds seem to be less important to crew and collective membership as language and socioeconomic backgrounds. Historically, language has been a key characteristic of crew formation, however, with the rise of bilingual speakers in Quebec this seems to be increasingly less the case among newer crews of writers and artists. Still, language remains an important identifier for crew identity. In crews like K6A for instance, where a majority of the members are Quebecoise, being fluent in French is important for inter-crew communication, even though many are bilingual to varying degrees. A crew name is usually initialized and is an acronym for something related to the notoriety of the writers

that they creatively think of together, and, like a writer's name choice, can change several times over before crew members decide on a permanent name.[107] Although graffiti crews are not gang oriented,[108] some members may be involved in gang or illegal activities such as shoplifting, drug dealing, and robberies. Some crews, particularly those made up of serious bombers, are small with limited membership, while others, such as those composed of established artists, tend to be more loosely organized. It is not uncommon for graffiti writers to be affiliated with several different crews concurrently. All of my participants who are older and more established writers and artists –Fluke, Axe, Zek, Scan, Stare, Monk-e, and Fonki –all have multiple crew affiliations (K6A, FT, KG, DA, TA, 156, SVC). Multiple crew affiliation is not specific to older and more established artists and writers as there are also many younger or novice practitioners who also have membership with more than one crew. Writers who form into crews tend to paint with each other on a regular basis and support each other's growth and development in becoming more skilled writers and artists. Dodo, a graffiti writer and artist originally from France who has made Montreal his home-base since the late 2000s mentioned that his crew mates Axe and Fleo have always looked after his best interests:

> When I have bad vibes, he was there for me, I don't have food to eat, he bring me food, I don't have a roof over my head, he gave me a bed. And Axe the same. And K6A since the beginning is more than a graffiti crew, they were really behind me, support me every day. Make me grow a lot, make me enjoy Montreal…you know in the darkest place, the most ghetto place, but also in like Place Des Arts, the Francofolis in front of a thousand people…from end to end, they have shown me Montreal in a different way than if I came as a usual French guy [tourist].

Fluke also jokes about how they [K6A and A'Shop] 'raised Dodo to be a fine young man,' helping to shape him as a mature adult as much as an artist. Most crews are made up of friends, but the strongest crews are made up of members who view each other as extended family, acting as a support network and looking out for each other's health and wellbeing as much as they are looking out for each other while they are *getting up* (painting graffiti and the prolific writing of one's name on surfaces throughout the city).

Street artists tend to be more solitary in their pursuits only coming together to work on specific projects with each other, forming temporary groups for the duration of these projects and then disbanding after they are completed. Groups of street artists may also form larger clusters and networks which can be called collectives in that members hold similar ideological, aesthetic, and political views, work towards shared goals, and consolidate materials and equipment. Street artists may also work and live together. Street artist collectives may form for a variety of reasons but more often it is for political, economic, or professional motives: to share the costs

of materials and to pool resources for exhibitions and events; to raise awareness about environmental and social justice issues or to represent particular individuals or groups in need; and to help develop the creative and professional talents of a group of artists by establishing a physical locale, or an artistic hub, where these artists can work together but also where potential clients can find them.

Like graffiti crews, street art collectives share risk and status through their work, but the risk and status is not tied to notoriety and illegality. Instead, street art collectives share status through the production of legal and public works of art and risk through the ownership of work and living spaces which depend on their continued cooperation to be successful. Street art collectives often share and maintain a collective workshop, studio, or exhibition space, pooling financial resources together to pay rent and manage materials and supplies. Unlike graffiti crews street artist groups and collectives have a wider spectrum of skill, age and regional backgrounds, with members tied to one another through more formal bonds and ideological connections than they are through ethnic, linguistic, or socio-economic similarities, and the shared risk taking of illegal painting and vandalism. Membership to street art collectives is not as coveted as it is in graffiti culture and members tend to me admitted more on the singular basis of their artistic skills and capacities than on whether they get up and can be trusted to *keep-six*[109] and not *snitch* or inform on another member. Graffiti writers also share similar ideologies, but these shared worldviews and outlooks do not necessarily keep them together as a crew as much as their shared risk taking. Some street art collectives are also similar to crews in that members view each other as an extended family, though more often I have witnessed members treat each other as friends who may very well be looking out for each other's health and wellbeing, but tend to remain casually professional with each other in these shared work spaces.

Graffiti and Counter Hegemony

In the context of graffiti, counter hegemony is employed two-fold. Firstly, by way of unlawful and antagonistic claims to property and public space which position it as an oppositional practice to the status quo, and, secondly, as a subculture which promotes its own rules, norms, and hierarchy of values, subverting hegemonic programs of normative behavioral expectations and codes of conduct. Contemporary graffiti writing has been a counter hegemonic practice since it began appearing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, having developed independently and organically on city streets from any traditional or institutionalized art forms and

practices. Graffiti artists have drawn inspiration from a variety of sources including popular culture and Dadaism, but also surrealism, pop art, and punk rock, even art history at times. Although contemporary graffiti has been celebrated as an art form by numerous appreciators and some academics, it was originally intended to be a form of highly specific textual communication between inner city youth. As it developed it proliferated through its own urban networks, outside of any formal settings and structures within the fields of established arts. Graffiti writers refused to submit to institutional valuations of aesthetics and practice and instead developed an entirely new and separate subculture and street art world which promoted its own conceptions and standards of style and aesthetics. Examining the concept of career in graffiti subculture then can provide a way by which we can see how social actors can pursue both illegitimate and legitimate strategies within counter hegemonic struggles.

Figure 2.1: Tags, alleyway, Montreal, 2015. Photo by Kris Murray.

Bombers and Artists

There are generally two different classes of graffiti writers: *bombers and artists*. Status within these classes is largely determined according to style, proficiency, and the quantity of output. To *bomb* or to go out *bombing* is to go and write graffiti. Most often, *bombing* is associated with doing tags[110] *(fig. 2.1)* or throw-ups[111] *(fig. 2.2)*, however, it can also refer to painting one's name "in any form on many different surfaces."[112] Stickers have also become a popular mode of getting up for many bombers and artists as they are relatively easy to put up without being detected by passerby.[113] An area that has been *bombed* has been covered and marked with graffiti, most likely quite heavily *(fig. 2.3).* Bombers generally tend to emphasize *quantity over quality* (output over style), especially in the early stages of their careers. Bombers will often dedicate great amounts of time getting up, often going on long day and night-time missions throughout the city to paint graffiti. The greater the quantity and the higher the risk, the more respect a bomber will get from other writers. Bombers also tend to take more risks to get up in hard to reach or dangerous locations.

If you're going to bomb then obviously you're going to be spending lots of time on the streets at night. Walking, climbing, probably drinking and doing other things too, you know…you're spending a lot of time on the streets. (Axe)

As bombers progress, they are increasingly judged by their peers for their style and form. Their proficiency to cleanly execute their graffiti (can control) and the calligraphy of their *hand styles* begin to take on greater importance. The need to prove one's proficiency with graffiti materials (cans, markers, etc.) and stylistic aptitude comes to take on as much importance as capacity to get up and remain uncaught. When it comes to tags, like in all things graffiti, there is a heavy emphasis on style which distinguishes writers from one another individually, but also regionally.[114] Bombers are aggressive graffiti writers, often battling over territory with other writers trying to claim them in their own name. As Fluke mentioned, "The best bombers of this city are the guys who go back, go back, go back over their spots." It is not uncommon to see bombers going over each other multiple times battling over a spot. If battles over spots escalate between bombers they may become cross out wars where each writer aggressively works to go over as much of the other writer as possible throughout the city. *Bombers* are mostly novice graffiti writers who are antagonistic and suspicious of other writers they do not know and of outsiders to the subculture. Many focus predominantly on tags, and throw ups but this does not mean that they lack the skills to paint pieces. When writers are out on the streets painting illegally they tend to stick to using the simpler and faster methods of getting up. Generally, bombers exhibit what can loosely be called a *purist* mentality, meaning that they lean towards a focus on deviant careers and chasing the adrenaline rush of getting up unlawfully above all else. All graffiti writers *bomb* but purists are especially scripturient and passionate about illicitly writing their names, and for many there is no threat of police or legal action that can deter them. This is especially the case for established bombers, graffiti writers who continue to bomb and build deviant careers, even after repeated run-ins with law enforcement, fines, and arrests. Established bombers are far fewer in number than novices and exhibit the most serious of

Figure 2.2: Throw up, Raze, Lisbon Portugal. 2014. Photo by Kris Murray.

purist attitudes about doing graffiti. Pask, a writer with decidedly purist inclinations told me that "For these guys it's already in their head that they will not stop…If they get caught or arrested like two times in a month, they will slow down. But they do not stop."

Figure 2.3: Piece, Scan. Plateau, Montreal. Photo by Kris Murray (2015).

Graffiti artists are established writers who have transitioned from bombing to painting more complex forms of graffiti such as pieces[115] *(fig. 2.4)* and productions[116] *(fig. 2.5)*. Although there are many graffiti artists who still bomb the streets, others have moved on to painting graffiti art on a more formal level, including legally sanctioned or commissioned works like canvasses, *popular shop graffiti murals,*[117] *(fig. 2.6)* and indoor installations. Graffiti artists tend to be older writers who have matured in the subculture and as individuals and may not wish to take as much risks in getting up as they used to during their bombing years. Some graffiti artists have had enough run-ins with law enforcement over the years or have criminal records as a result of being caught bombing so they are less inclined to continue pursuing graffiti as a deviant career. Those who pursue it seriously as a vocation aim to build a legitimate reputation and career around their graffiti art painting popular shop murals, exhibiting in galleries and art shows, and participating in arts festivals and events. Artists tend to emphasize *quality over quantity* (style over output) often dedicating great amounts of time towards practicing and improving their techniques and styles by painting pieces, productions, and murals. The greater the quality (style) that an artist displays, the greater the respect he gains from his peers in the subculture. Still, quantity remains an important symbol of status and artists are constantly looking for places to piece or paint productions, permission or

Figure 2.4: Bombed doorway. Plateau Montreal. 2017. Photo by Kris Murray.

Figure 2.5: Rocksteady Crew Production, House of Paint, 2016. Photo by Kris Murray.

commission murals or installations, exhibits to showcase their art, and jams or events in which to participate. Pieces demand more time and effort than tagging or throw ups so graffiti artists tend to paint in semi-public and public locations where they can spend more time focusing on producing quality graffiti paintings on legal walls, at events and festivals, or in liminal areas along the sides of public infrastructure and abandoned buildings throughout the city.

Graffiti artists who are going towards the mural game are still painting illegal spots every day, or looking for these new abandoned spots, but they're not going there to do a blockbuster on the front of the building so that everyone can see them, they are going there to because it's a great spot to work on their styles and practice their letters and chill out. (Rizek)

A graffiti artist is more somebody who is trying to harness the craft more. Usually it's a graffiti writer who turns into a graffiti artist. As you get older, who want to have a whole day at a wall to paint like a really beautiful piece, like harness you power. But when you're younger it's more angsty…it comes with maturity, in a way, a lot of writers have stayed writers, *writers*, for a long time, but I think that, generally speaking, a graffiti artist is someone who is spending more time like, trying [to improve] the quality of their work. (Awe)

To say muralist or to say graffiti artist is the same thing. Well, a graffiti artist *is* a muralist. Not every muralist are graffiti writers but every graffiti writer is painting on murals. So to me all these ways describe who I am: graffiti artist. I don't like street art because of all the connotations, and, like the fakeness of it. I'm still an urban artist, public artist, muralist; I'm a painter; I'm a alchemeographfist; I'm a visual artist. I [identify with] all of these…I'm even an international professional muralist. (Monk-e)

There's some who do graffiti art and its nice, there's some who do just pieces and its graffiti, but it's not the same graffiti if they never drop a tag…it is graffiti if they do lettering, and they do the form. But if they always paint at all the legal walls and that's all they've done in their life, then they are not a graffiti writer…they would be doing graffiti art. (Fonki)

Graffiti artists tend to develop what could be called a *muralist* mentality and are more likely to focus on developing their technical skills and exploring stylistic elements in their painting, possibly building towards a public or professional arts identity using their subcultural experiences as a springboard into more legitimate work. This is sort of a point of contention among those who view themselves as either purists or muralists. Many bombers hold that

Figure 2.6: Graffiti mural. Axe, Zek, Dfek. Plateau, Montreal. Photo by Kris Murray (2008).

writers and artists need to maintain their names on the streets to be recognized and respected as being serious in the scene. Those artists who have not spent enough time on the streets writing, maintaining their street credibility and paying their dues, could be seen by purists as being less authentic than those who have deeper histories. Purists will often vandalise their murals with tags and throw ups as signs of disrespect and to intimidate them.[118]

Purist and muralist mentalities are not mutually exclusive, with graffiti writers often exhibiting attitudes from either end of the spectrum. Most often graffiti writers will carry over their purist attitudes into their mural work, which wane over time as the writer increasingly focuses on painting graffiti art rather than bombing. On the one hand, bombers tend to remain purist in their mentalities, rarely having muralist attitudes. This is likely because they lack either the skill or an interest to pursue graffiti art and muralism more seriously. Still, there are many bombers who piece and paint productions with their crew mates, some of them with impressive can control and style. The pieces and productions they do paint, however, tend to not to be for public consumption, are painted

illegally and are located in what Marc Auge (1995) has termed 'non-spaces.' Pieces and productions by purist writers will likely be found more in abandoned buildings and in semi-public locations like

Figure 2.7: Cross out war K6A vs. TOS. St. Henri, Montreal. Photo by Kris Murray (2017)

industrial districts, along city infrastructure or on freight trains and along train tracks. Graffiti artists, on the other hand, can, and often do, hold purist attitudes to painting graffiti in that they continue to paint their letters and names into their popular shop graffiti murals if they can. They also tend to adhere to traditional subculture values and informal methods in procuring and painting pieces, productions, and murals. As Awe mentioned, "I'm a graffiti artist who does murals. I'm also a graffiti writer because I still do illegal graffiti." This is not an uncommon disposition among graffiti artists, though the degree or extent to which any graffiti artist may take risks bombing varies from individual to individual. Many also still continue to drop tags here and there by marker or sticker, getting up without taking on too much risk, maintaining some connection to the purist spirit of graffiti, even if only irregularly. Additionally, artists are also more likely to struggle with these mentalities, often debating the proper course of action or strategy to deal with cross outs and challenges from bombers and other writers. Awe explained his debate over how to deal with a bomber who had crossed out a popular shop graffiti mural that he and Axe had painted for a Portuguese taco restaurant in St. Henri:

As a mural artist slash graffiti writer…trying to do both those things is like, yeah, I'm gonna repair it…but my graffiti writer side is going to message the dude and

be like, 'look man, you're either giving us paint or you're coming to help us repair it or like we're going to war. I could take your shit out in like one night….I don't give a fuck, I will do it.' And I was like 'not only will I take your shit out but any motherfucker who has your back is going down too. I will take you all out.'

Fluke also explained that some graffiti artists still hold to purist ideals strongly while others are able to find a middle ground.

To some graffiti artists, or guys who used to do graffiti, there's a certain amount of nostalgia or respect within this tribalistic culture. And that respect and nostalgia is different for each person. Some veterans, until the day they'll die, will honor and respect that tradition, and never *dare* paint a mural, and never *dare* fucking sell out…and that's ok. Because that's *their* reality. And for some, like for Zek…it's like 'Hey, I do both. I want to stay relevant in the street…I want to do really good pieces, I'll push myself as a writer, but I also want to do this mural shit because it looks dope and I like what it looks like and whatever.'

He commented that "some people are well where they are and they evolve within that sphere." He was speaking about the hardliner purists who are "out at night and bombing, (for) that adrenaline rush." He paused, "That was my thing, but for only a very short period." For Fluke, the praise he started to receive from outside of his subcultural peer network, from the public for his graffiti art, quickly influenced and inspired him to pursue painting murals as a vocation. "I started painting (for the) city, I started painting schools, I did productions with boys…even just painting for fun on the weekends. Because I was attracted to the *applause*." At the same time, he recognizes that his desire for success and celebrity status are also driving forces behind his choices to do so. "I had an easy evolution from bombing to creating nicer things because I liked the feedback I was getting...I was like, 'you want to pay me for that? Word.' So I started doing murals."

The Role of Mentors in Graffiti Subculture

At one point graffiti only offered the possibility of a deviant career, but as authors like Snyder (2009), Murray (2010), and Kramer (2010) have shown, graffiti subculture has also evolved to include legal and legitimate career paths for those who pursue graffiti art and muralism seriously as a vocation. According to these authors, legal and legitimate applications of graffiti art and muralism can provide alternative pathways towards career success, social integration, civic engagement and ownership which fall outside of institutional or normative means of professional development. In this sense, graffiti art and muralism represent a revival of artistic critique at the subcultural level where the pursuit of an alternative lifestyle continues to be a central and guiding principle of resistance to exploitive and alienating conditions of new capitalist society. Historically, mentorship between established and novice graffiti writers within the subculture has been an integral mechanism in the

transmission of alternative values and practices associated with this lifestyle.

The concept of career among graffiti writers has been facilitated by the presence of older and more established writers who mentored novices through their initial stages. Skilled mentors introduced novice writers not just to their own work but that of other writers and artists in the subculture. By doing so, novices came to believe that there was an audience for graffiti, including their own. This belief in one's audience was a determining precondition for an individual's engagement with graffiti and eventual adoption of the lifestyle, values, and norms associated with the subculture. Moreover, this belief in an audience could only be fully realized through the novice's personal acquaintance with a mentor. This mentor-novice relationship, therefore, helped to structure social relations among subculture members in that it served to limit new recruits to those who shared a geographical and social proximity to each other thereby reproducing concentrations and networks of graffiti writers over time. Consequently, many novices were mentored under established writers and artists who lived in the same housing block or neighborhood as they did.[119]

Graffiti productions and murals were sites where mentors trained their protégés on how to apply their talents more artistically as well as on proper etiquette when dealing with other artists, patrons, and the public. Writers learned to check their egos when painting with others in a production, first with crew mates and then with other writers when they participated in jams or larger multi writer or crew productions. They learned to work with other writers matching color schemes and lettering styles, respecting boundaries by not taking up too much room with their own pieces or encroaching on the writers beside them. In these ways, mentoring novices helped to move them away from purely antagonistic attitudes to those more agonistically oriented where they viewed other writers as adversaries or competitors rather than enemies. Often, those collaborating would get to know each other and friendships were formed between writers and crews from different cities and countries. For many older writers and artists, painting graffiti murals was a way of informally developing a vocational career, with many supplementing their incomes with commissioned wall projects. Throughout the 1990s and into the mid-2000s there were dozens of graffiti murals painted on restaurants and small businesses like cafes, laundromats, family grocery and corner stores in downtown neighborhoods of Montreal city, such as the Plateau or St. Henri.

Axe and Awe are two Montreal-based graffiti artists who continue to pursue graffiti muralism as a vocation, adhering to what could be called traditional attitudes and practices of the subculture.

Axe is a Quebecois graffiti artist having gotten his start in Montreal in the early 1990s at the age of 14. After spending several years bombing the streets he gained recognition and membership in K6A Crew and would later go on to co-found KG (Kings of Graffiti) with other prestigious graffiti artists Serak, Stare, and Scan. In 2009 he went on to work alongside the artists of A'Shop, the premier graffiti art and mural painting company in Montreal responsible for some the city's more recognized mural works. He has since left A'Shop to focus more on painting popular shop graffiti murals where he feels that he can and explore his artistic talents through less commercial applications. He continues to pursue graffiti muralism as a vocation, working odd jobs and painting graffiti murals for small restaurants and shops during the warmer months.

In the summer of 2015 Axe began mentoring Awe, a young Jewish writer (26 years old) who was recently accepted into the K6A Crew pending his probation under Axe's tutelage.[120] Awe started bombing around the age of 16 but did not take it more seriously until about four years ago, thinking about his future as an artist and what he wants to do with his talents in terms of a career. He is extremely passionate about graffiti writing and art and wants to develop his painting skills in a ways which remain authentic to the subculture. Axe explained that established graffiti crews would sometimes bring in younger writers, 'fresh blood', to liven up and keep the crew current and up-to-date on what is happening in the streets and the subculture. He said that connecting with Awe's excitement and passion for painting had re-invigorated his own sense and desire to paint as well, "Awe gave me a fresh, nice little push. So now I'm coaching this guy and I kind of want to get better myself too. So he's making me better. It's a good combination. Young and old, you know."

He says that Awe needs to pay his dues by doing menial tasks and labor such as backgrounds and fill-ins before they write him down (officially accept him into the crew). Axe has routinely brought Awe along with him to help him paint and fulfil popular shop mural contracts around the city as part of his training. Awe was reluctant to completing these tasks at first but soon realized that these were important areas that he needed experience in if he was to grow and improve as an artist and muralist. One of the first walls that they painted together was a graffiti mural for a Mexican restaurant named *Torteria Lupita* located on the corner of Rue Therein and Notre-Dame Street West in the borough of St Henri in Montreal *(fig. 2.8)*. Awe found this part of his mentorship to be challenging as he was put to task on aspects of painting he had never really practiced or cared to hone more on his own:

Almost every gig Axe was doing, he'd let me come and help. But I wouldn't sign in, I wouldn't take any credit for it…because I'm just supposed to be learning. For example…he had me out in the sun all day trying to fill (backgrounds), and paint shit that I couldn't paint. That's what he's been doing, he's been getting me to paint shit that I can't paint…like teaching me to paint…and that's why this has been such a liberating and such an empowering experience for me because…basically since Axe that quality of mine has really been exercised.

It is through the mentorship that Awe is learning about the finer aspects of graffiti art and muralism, that, had he not been taken under Axe's tutelage he may not have learned at all, "He continues to teach me that I could paint what I never thought I could paint." It is these skills that have helped given him a healthier appreciation for graffiti art and have shown him that he indeed does have what it takes to pursue a more serious career in painting graffiti murals. Awe has learned not just about the techniques, values, and rules associated

Figure 2.8: Graffiti mural. Axe and Awe. St. Henri, Montreal. Photo by Kris Murray (2018)

with graffiti writing and muralism, but he has also gained a civic awareness in that he recognizes his work needs to appeal to a wider audience and not just the graffiti community. Moreover, he now sees that this needs to be balanced with efforts to safeguard graffiti writing culture:

We need to preserve a certain amount of history or traditional graffiti in these productions. When a wall is painted, it is in a public place…it is affecting everybody…the graffiti writers, parents, elderly people, and children…everybody in the community…you need to try to paint something that will satisfy everybody. And that includes the graffiti writers…So that's why I think it is important to paint murals that incorporate pieces, graffiti art, traditional graffiti lettering…elements that everyone can understand…so that we can kind of unify the two worlds…we could show the public that graffiti art can actually be beautiful and that the forms and the colors could be something inspiring.

Awe's experience highlights and adds perspective to growing disconnect between newer generations of writers and those who are more established. Mentoring is a rare occurrence these days so he sees himself as having been fortunate to meet Axe and work with him. Awe said that mentoring is "an aspect of graffiti that is kind of dying a little bit." There seems to be an increasingly purist mentality

among younger writers and he feels that Axe and other crew members have helped to connect him to a "more traditional graffiti":

> It really opened up some doors for me. I learned a lot from them, like the old fashioned way… I actually got people who spent their lives painting, like take me aside and be like 'I'm going to teach you this and that. And I want you to know this about graffiti and that, I want you to know this story, about what happened to me, and I want you to know this trick to do with spray cans…' Hands on training, I'm talking like, the real way, the way graffiti is supposed to be.

The mentorship has also clearly brought Axe and Awe closer together. During Awe's training period between 2015 and 2018, the two of them spent a great deal of time with each other and have developed a brotherly comradery. Their relationship began to extend beyond painting graffiti as well. Axe explained that soon after taking him in that "I brought him to Kung Fu too, so he's really following my steps. He works at Stereo as a busboy, which I did, and he's got almost the same name as me, just switch a letter." Still, Axe makes sure to keep his ego from inflating and reminds him often that he has much to prove as a graffiti writer and an artist. But Awe knows he has a good deal of practice ahead of him before he is recognized as a graffiti artist by his peers. He said, "You have all these big guys looking at me, at my pieces, and I don't feel like I'm *that* advanced. It's kind of like, I'm not that good you know? I know that's a weird thing to say but, like, even Axe has said that to me." Axe sees great potential in Awe as a writer and an artist, and knows that he will carry on the traditions and techniques he has learned. Still, Axe says that he playfully 'bully's' Awe and makes sure to remind him that he is not 'quite there yet,', "Awe, I like to bully. Less and less but he wants to be K6A…A couple of years of doing back grounds and getting bullied, and at some point, like, alright man you made it, you deserve that shit. He wants it too. He wants it really bad. So we got to bully him."[121] Indeed, Awe is learning much from him, not just painting techniques, but humility as well. They go to martial arts classes together, travel and work together, and through these experiences they have become dependent on each other, not just as co-workers, but as friends.

In Montreal a number of established writers that I have spoken to mentioned having similar mentor-like relationships with older more experienced writers who showed them the techniques of 'proper' writing and style. Even if they did not have a direct mentor, they were surrounded my many established writers and artists who imparted their knowledge on to them when they were out painting or when they organized productions, jams, and events. Five8 said that "There were a lot of other artists that I looked up to that were more well-rounded. They kind of did a bit of everything, and they were good at everything: tags, throws, pieces, and even figurative things

or detailed backgrounds and stuff like that...the circle of people that I hung around, liked to do productions." For Fluke who started out bombing and painting in the early 1990s, the older generation of writers instilled in him a strong respect for all the levels of doing graffiti, both illegal and legal:

> This is what they taught me: They're like, 'man, we do pieces, we do throw ups, we do tags, we do *productions* together, because we like doing more elaborate pieces…And today I feel like we're in a generation where graffiti artists don't even consider doing murals because it's not a thing that graffiti writers do sometimes. Now it's a thing that *anybody fucking* does and calls it street art and they just made it like, so not cool that graffiti writers don't want part in that shit anymore, traditionally speaking. They aren't even doing productions anymore. Now it's like 'It's graff or nothing!'

Fluke and Five8 come from generations where they learned the rules and values of the subculture from these mentors who took the time to work with them and to help them develop their artistic aptitudes with aerosol paints and their public personas through a balance of illegal and legal forms of graffiti. The days of mentoring between older more established artists and the younger writers, however, are quickly fading away. Out of all the younger graffiti writers I have met, less and less discuss having a mentor, and even less talk about a wanton to learn from an older and more established writer who can teach them the rules of engagement or graffiti muralism. Rizek mentioned that when he was growing up, his generation of writers, used to catch Five8 and Dre tags in the alleys, that there was more layers to see and that one could find tags, throwies and pieces from the older generations of writers. But as the city increases its buffing and more murals are going up, "All of these old school spots are disappearing and then the new generation comes in, and, they are not doing their history, that's for sure, they are just getting up on the streets. When they don't see someone's name on the streets they just think that he's a toy." Younger writers are seemingly more interested in bombing than art, notoriety than fame, and do not see the older generation as offering them any form of transferable knowledge or skills that they can apply in the current culture of graffiti and street art muralism in cities today.

Graffiti Places: Phun Phactory & 5 Pointz

Traditionally, graffiti writer networks were established through crews in neighboring boroughs and cities who interacted with each other mostly through the enforcement of their respective territories. Usually crews made claims to boroughs or neighborhoods where members lived. Writers would make excursions into other boroughs, bombing runs, to test the resolve of other crews, regulate their territories, and to lay claims to new ones. Relations between crews tended to be hostile and typically manifested through cross out

battles (one writer versus another) or cross out wars (entire crews of writers facing off against each other). When these cross out battles and wars escalated, writers often had fist fights to settle their scores. Although scraps over the regulation of wall spaces were common, it would rarely, if ever, go beyond beating each other up. [122] Over time these crews worked out more diplomatic solutions with each other and even cross pollinated through graffiti jams which involved writers from multiple crews. It was the establishment of physical locales –*graffiti places*[123] –beginning in the 1990s which enabled and fostered larger networks to be formed between writers on a national and even international scale. In 1993, after reaching an agreement with property owner Jerry Wolfcoff, The Phun Phactory was founded by Pat DiLillo in Long Island New York. Pioneering graffiti writer and artist Iz the Wiz was hired as the curator and manager of the location. From 1993 until 2002 The Phun Phactory served as a safe and supportive area where young and old writers could openly paint together. Iz the Wiz also served as a sort of ambassador to many travelling writers from across North and South America and Europe who would make pilgrimages to the factory – deemed the mecca of graffiti writing –to meet and paint with New York City veterans like Iz and others. In 2002, after some negotiation with Wolcoff, the writer Meres One took over the location and renamed it 5Pointz *(fig. 2.9)* and became curator of the location.

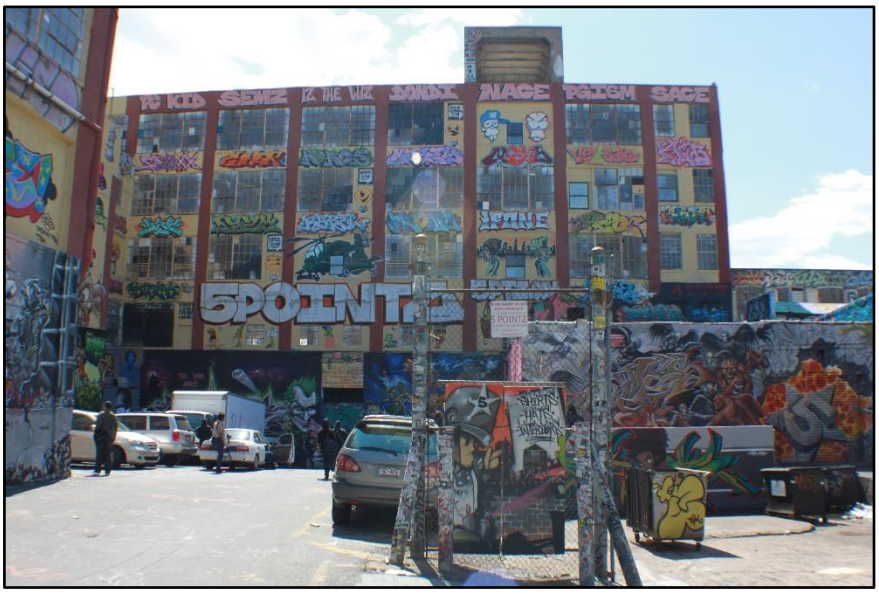

Figure 2.9: 5 Pointz, New York City. 2011. Photo by Kris Murray.

5Pointz continued to serve as a mecca for writers from across the globe to come and paint with local New York graffiti writing legends and hold graffiti jams up until 2012-13. By 2014 the location had been completely demolished and a large condominium complex built in its place after Wolcoff made the controversial decision to redeveloped. 5pointz is now only remembered through limited

internet and publication coverage and the memories and testimonies of veteran graffiti writers and others who either painted there or visited to appreciate the graffiti art.[124] It was the earliest example of graffiti writers establishing a physical location which served to both insert them and the subculture into the history of the city. It was also as an important hub/node through which graffiti writers were able to establish a wider network of relations between cities, states, and countries. It was through those initial networks that graffiti writing and culture would begin to be diffused internationally across the globe.

Several years after The Phun Phactory was founded, writers and crews in other cities across North America also established locales and events to promote and formalise graffiti writing culture as an artistic form and practice. Montreal has always had a strong cultural connection to New York City and both cities have historically been touristic destinations for each other. Many Montreal writers have been influenced by the New York scene through their travels and the transmission of graffiti writing culture through popular book, films, and documentaries. Particularly popular among graffiti writers is the documentary *Style Wars* by Henry Chalfant and Tony Silver (1983) and the books *Subway Art* (Chalfant & Cooper 1984) and *Spraycan Art* (Chalfant 1987).[125] These longstanding connections to New York have influenced and inspired writers and artists to make their own claims and organise their own events. Throughout the years there have been numerous jams and events organised in boroughs across Montreal, however, two of these events, Under Pressure and Meeting of Styles, have had the most impact.

Under Pressure

In March of 1996, three years after the Phun Phactory had been founded, writers in Montreal organized a public graffiti art event, *Aerosol Funk*, which aimed to introduce locals to hip hop culture, graffiti writing and its practitioners. That event was significant as it was the first public graffiti art oriented event ever to be held in Montreal. Built on the success of Aerosol Funk, on August 19th 1996, the first *Under Pressure* Hip Hop and graffiti convention took place. Although more organized it was still a small event that was held in an open lot in the Plateau district on the corner of Boulevard Mont-Royal and Henri-Julien. It was the first national Hip Hop and graffiti event of its kind in Canada which involved 21 writers[126] from four major Canadian cities (Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa).[127] The national scope of Under Pressure provided a venue and opportunity for writers to begin building meaningful networks between these cities.

Twenty-two years later, Under Pressure is still taking place, having since found a more permanent location on Bullion and Saint Catherine's Street between Saint-Elizabeth and Saint-Dominique since 1999 *(figs. 2.10-11)*. The event has now been extended to nearly a week long and involves over a hundred graffiti writers each year, dozens of skate boarders, break dancers and deejays, supplemented with music venues hosting rap and hip hop groups from across the United States and Canada and thousands of spectators. In the last several years organizers have also hosted panels and discussions pertaining to issues in the hip hop community and society more generally including indigenous knowledge and rights, gender equality, poverty, and pedagogical applications of hip hop in class rooms.

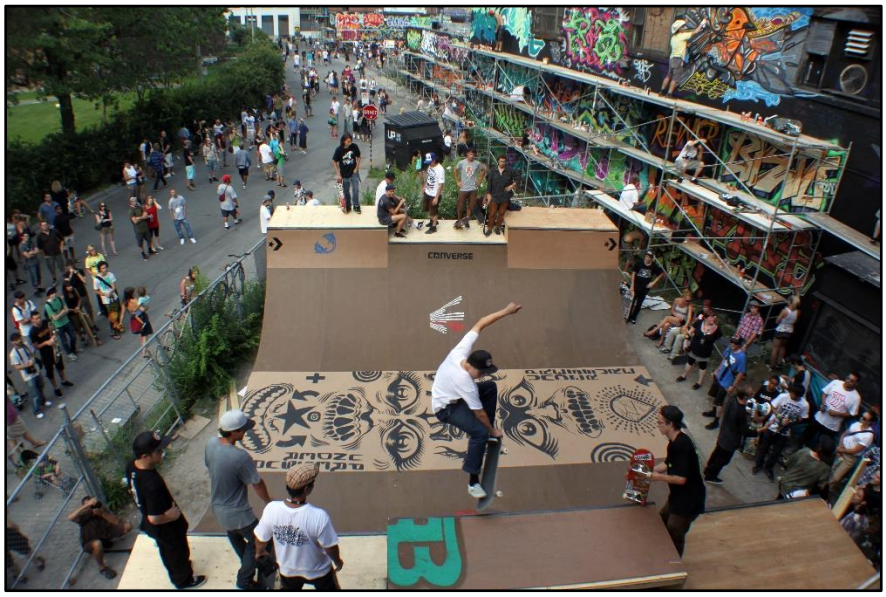

Figure 2.10: Under Pressure. Montreal. 2011. Photo by Kris Murray.

The event has had major corporate sponsors over the years including Absolute Vodka, Pabst Blue Ribbon, and Molotow Paints, however, as Seaz – one of the founding members and organizers since 1996 – explains, the goal of the event has never been to make a profit, rather it has been to continue the tradition of raising awareness of social issues and celebrating graffiti subculture as well as maintaining close ties to those in the community:

> Some of the same people come back, but the point is that they are invested in it, it's their event. It's not about changing it every year…Under Pressure is a family organization with a community around it. It's not a business thing. Here's an event that is strictly about community and individual support. It's not based on dollar investment.

Although the organisers can take a great deal of credit for the event's continued success and reach, it would also not be possible without the hard work and dedication of volunteers. Many have continued to

work with Under Pressure since the event's inception (including myself for over ten years in a variety of functions but mostly as a photographer). As well, the continued dedication of the volunteers and event organizers has instilled a strong sense of civic ownership which is also echoed in the testimony by Seaz in an interview from 2008:

> It's incredible, it's an honour to still be here doing this, and it's crazy! I tell them that were going to keep doing this for fifteen more years just because it's not about money, and that's where the corporations can't compete with us, really it's about ownership. They have an inherent interest and investment in the success of this [and] that's why they'll always be there for us.[128]

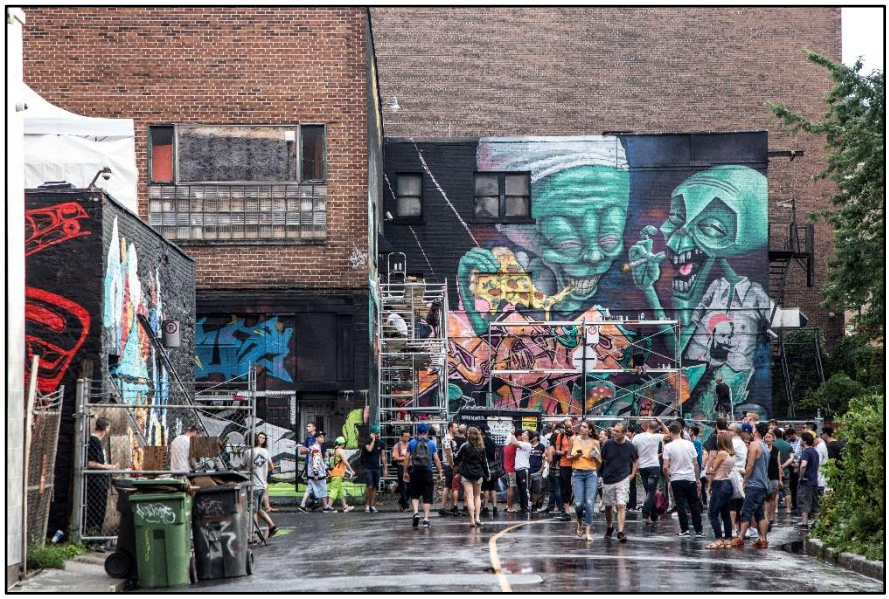

Figure 2.11: Under Pressure. Montreal. 2017. Photo by Kris Murray.

Seaz remains involved in the major operations of the event even though he has since entered into municipal politics and is busy with his duties as a public councillor for the borough of Verdun in Montreal. Alongside him are Flow, fellow old school writer, crew member and co-founder of the event and, more recently, Melissa Proietti, an academic and long-time volunteer who has since become a co-organiser. The strength of the event's continued success still comes from the individuals who organize and contribute to it on a yearly basis, which remains a volunteer based endeavor. This event, however, has become more than just these individuals: it has created a legitimate platform from which writers can engage the public, provide an alternative discourse against the negative framing in the media, and maybe even raise awareness about social, economic, and political issues such as women's and indigenous rights, climate change, and the pedagogical value of Hip Hop culture. Importantly, these benefits are in large part tied to the establishment of Under

Pressure as a permanent locale in the Plateau of Montreal which has allowed them to insert themselves into the historical project of the city.

The success of Under Pressure effectively paved the way for other events to take place in other parts of the city such as Lachine (Do It Jam), Notre-Dames de Graces (Hip Hop You Don't Stop), Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (Rouen Tunnel Jam), and Meeting of Styles which would go on to be the second largest international graffiti and hip hop event in North America for a short period of time. Moreover, throughout the years organisers for Under Pressure have provided advice, key logistical knowledge, and know-how to visiting artists and event organizers who have in turn started events in their own home towns and cities in other parts of Canada, such as House of Paint in Ottawa (since 2013), Hopscotch in New Brunswick (since 2015), the Rust Magic festival in Edmonton (since 2016), and the Festival de Canes in Longueil, Quebec (since 2017). Under Pressure, is, and continues to be, an example of best practice for how these types of events can be informally organized and managed (especially with the committed participation of volunteers, supporters, and enthusiasts/appreciators). Indeed, even one of the co-founders of Mural Festival Andre Bathalon, noted to me in an interview that it was Under Pressure that helped to inspire him and his fellow partners to pursue their street art mural project. It should also be noted that Hopscotch and Rust are decidedly more street art mural oriented even though they label themselves as being graffiti art events, which arguably has much to do with the representation of graffiti artists and muralists in their event lineups.

Meeting of Styles

Another example of how establishing and informally curating a physical locale or a *graffiti place* helps to build local, national, and international relations and networks between writers and subcultural communities is the event *Meeting of Styles*.[129] Meeting of Styles is not just an event, it is also an international organization of graffiti writers, artists, and supporters which sponsors graffiti art events in over sixteen countries worldwide. The first event was organised in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1997 in response to municipal plans to demolish and redevelop an abandoned slaughter house district which had become a popular painting spot for writers throughout the early 1990s. Local writers organized events to promote and legitimize graffiti art and to bring attention to the value this area had to urban street culture more generally. In 1994 the *Kulturzentrum Schlachthof* (Cultural Centre Slaughterhouse) was founded to preserve the

historical structures and elements in the area and to offer venues for music shows and parties. From 1997 to 2001 yearly graffiti art events were held which attracted thousands of spectators, however, this did not stop redevelopment plans. Eventually the location was demolished and the event had to locate a new venue. Afterwards graffiti writers and artists were inspired to take the event outside of the city limits.[130] In 2002 the event and organization was renamed Meeting of Styles (MOS) and is now held yearly in almost a dozen

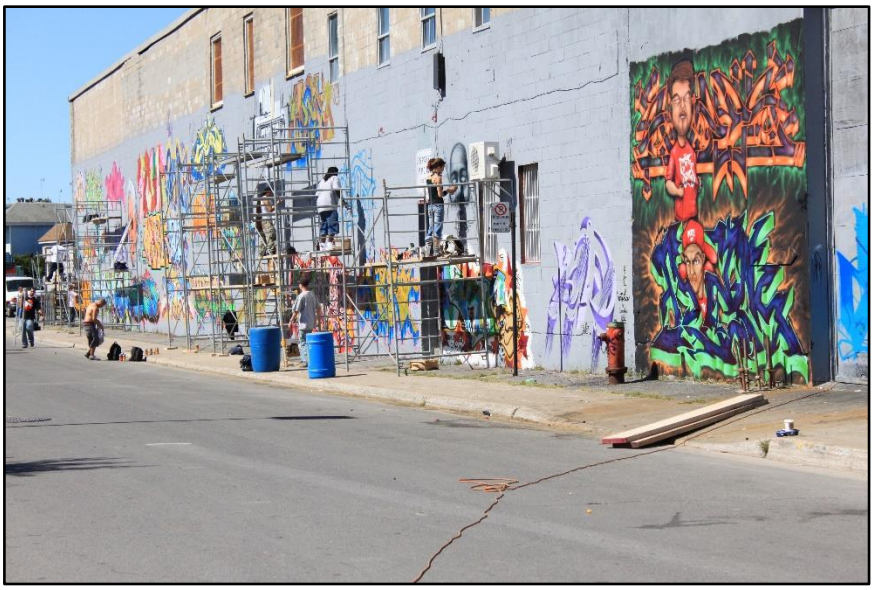

Figure 2.12: Meeting of Styles, Cote-St.-Paul, Montreal. 2009. Photo by Kris Murray.

cities worldwide, including Wiesbaden when possible.[131] It is said to be the most successful international hip hop event in the world, organised and coordinated in each city by local writers, artists, enthusiasts, and supporters who manage their own budgets, volunteers, and arrangements for music, break dancing, and venues.

In 2006, members from several crews between Montreal and New York City – Senk (AG Crew), Zek (JKR, KG, 156), and Criz (156) –got in contact with the MOS international crew and organized the first Montreal Meeting of Styles. This was an important event which helped to strengthen ties between Montreal and New York (among other cities/states in the USA) connecting artists and organisers between the two cities and which led to further collaborations and events. From 2006 until 2008 the event was held centrally in the city in a parking and back lot area on the corner of Bleury and St Catherine's Street, a couple of avenues away from Place Des Arts where presently the Quartier des Spectacles is located. In 2008, the event was split up and a portion of it was held on St Catherine`s Street in a fenced off parking lot near the location of where the Under Pressure Graffiti Festival continues to be held.

Organisers were able to acquire a more permanent venue in the Cote Saint Paul area as the location on Bleury had been rezoned for a building project. The location in Cote Saint Paul area, negotiated by organisers and the property owners, is a massive industrial building on Cabot Street just next to St. Remi that served as a permanent location for the event for several years *(fig.2.12)*. The event continued to be held at this location for several years until it was dissolved due to a lack of support from the city and subculture members to continue organising it. Fluke and other members of K6A Crew took over the event's organization, changing the event name to *Can You Rock* for its last 2 years (2012-2013). Besides logistical and budgetary issues, many of those involved in managing the event had gone on to grow themselves professionally in other ventures which demanded more and more time from them, leaving them little time to organise events beyond 2013. As well, the organisers and other crew members wanted to keep the location less public and more community oriented. The location remains as the *Can You Rock Hall of Fame* where only select writers by invitation –usually from out of town –come to paint with AG or K6A Crew members and hold private or secret jams rather than larger more public events.

It is the establishment of these physical locations and events through the graffiti writing and street art subcultures that have helped to normalise street art muralism as a public art in many cities today. The writers, artists, and organisers of these events formed the first relationships and built trust with local patrons and property owners. It is on the basis of these long standing relationships that the frameworks necessary for large scale events such as Mural Festival in Montreal have been made more possible. Moreover, it is this new matrix of relations between artists, municipalities, patrons, property owners, and sponsors which has come to influence and inspire other artists and organisers across Canada to follow in step and put on mural arts festivals and events in their cities as well.

Street Art and Counter Hegemony

In the context of street art, counter hegemony is employed by way of critical artistic practices which subvert and critique existing socio-political structures and values. Street art confronts the dominant hegemony directly through affective persuasions and clever subversions of popular culture and common sense. Capitalism utilizes semiotic techniques (e.g. advertising, commercial marketing) and technologies (e.g. television, film, print, and the internet) to manipulate affect in order to create "modes of subjectivation that are necessary for its reproduction."[132] Consumer desires and identities must be constantly mobilized and manipulated in order for capitalism to retain its hegemonic dominance. Advertising is central to these strategies of manipulating and managing desires and identities through the promotion of specific

products and services but also in the production of fantasy worlds which consumers can identify and relate to. The recent promotion of the virtual as well as personalized technologies is the latest strategic manoeuvre by capitalism to collapse the distance between individual and product into immersive experience. As a critical artistic practice, street art directly engages with this affective terrain through the agonistic (re)production of new subjectivities. That is, street art utilizes affective subversions of popular culture, as well as social and political satire in public space to produce and reproduce subjective attitudes which run counter to those of the dominant hegemonic order.

Street art has no subculture like graffiti, and lacks the leadership, social cohesion (strong social ties between members) and collective identity associated with shared struggles to properly be called a social movement. Still street art has loosely been referred to as a movement namely because of the sustained actions by artists to continually push and expand the limits of artistic production. Numerous street artists have also made efforts to visualize their dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, voice their support or opposition to environmental, social or political campaigns, and work to raise awareness about marginalized groups and injustices in the world. There are collectives of street artists who work together to produce artistic expositions, interventions and mural arts projects – En Masse is a good example of this –but members are held together loosely by weak social bonds and tend to only organize around project based activities. What street artists may lack in terms of a collective identity or shared struggle they make up for in having a sort of *connectionist* logic and disposition. This an important characteristic which brings many street artists into contact with a variety of groups, commercial and government entities, as well as social and political causes that they lend their artistic skills to help visualize claims connected to them. Whether this is enough to make street art a movement onto itself is arguable, however, many street artists are socially and politically motivated and are likely already members of other social movements and so use their art to visually represent and raise awareness to these causes. So it is perhaps easy to see the loosely connected projects within street art as a sort of social movement, but street artists are not focused on a particular goal to be achieved. Rather, street art is a loosely connected field of critical artistic intervention and practice which, by virtue of the connectionist logic that drives its practitioners, has extended into a myriad of social and political movements on a global scale. The implications of this global extension of street art into the plurality of social and political movements will be discussed later in this work, but for now I will continue to elaborate upon the value and role of connectionist logic in graffiti and street art today.

Boltanksi and Chiapello describe connectionist logic as being at the heart of social life in today's reticularly oriented society where "social life is composed of a proliferation of encounters and temporary, but reactivatable connections with various groups, operated at potentially considerable social, professional, geographical and cultural distance." (2005:104) Network connections are defined largely through projects which provide a temporary reason and occasion for individuals and groups to come together for short periods of intense collaborative work. The success of these collaborative projects in turn helps to build enduring links between social actors which after the completion of a project are put on hold but remain available for reactivation when another project takes shape. They further their argument by suggesting that this connectionist logic is central to the formation of new maxims for success: being highly connected and mobile, possessing a wide variety of skills and training, and a portfolio of self-managed projects continually being worked on. Essentially this a type of commodification of the social, the instrumentalization of human relations, fundamentally reorienting why we choose to connect with and relate to one another. Connectionist logic thus finds its ultimate articulation in the formation of what they have termed *the projective city*, the 'city of projects,' where the active formation of networks and participation in networked activities is the basis for the organization of society, permeating all grammar and defining all relations.

I found this connectionist logic deeply embedded in the social matrix of both graffiti and street artists that participated in my research and among those in the subculture and street arts community more generally. This connectionist logic has also been amplified by social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram which have provided graffiti and street artists a means to promote their work to even larger audiences on an international level. Social media platforms also enable these types of reactivatable and temporary connections which helps to further enhance their social and professional statuses. The artists I followed routinely used these social media platforms to promote their work, make new connections and rekindle old ones to find work and mural projects to paint. Many used Instagram and the in application mail feature for these purposes. I often connected and communicated with a number of graffiti and street artists over the course of my fieldwork through Facebook and Instagram chats. Indeed, many of the street artists I engaged with were actively trying to increase their presence online through social media platforms. An online presence is considered to be a key ingredient to establishing one's relevance in the street art world. For many graffiti writers it is about who knows you in the subculture, that is, getting up and being known amongst your peers, whereas in

the street art world it is about getting up and being known publicly, that is, it is about who knows you in general. Graffiti writers may want to be known as the greatest of all time among other writers in the subculture or for their infamy, but street artists want to be household names and popularly famous, to be widely recognized even by those outside of the street art world.

There is also a high willingness for many artists to blindly go cities which have high densities of graffiti and street art or during a high profile events with just the possibility of making a connection to paint a wall or be a part of a jam or mural project. This is most common among younger artists or those who are just beginning to paint more seriously. Artists who are more established will likely use pre-existing contacts to get entry into jams and events or to set up walls to paint before travelling. Art Basel Miami and Mural festival Montreal represent probably the best examples of this connectionist logic at work that I observed during my field work. Connectionist logic is much more contained when it comes to graffiti subculture in that the connections writers and artists make tend to remain within the general limits of the subculture, between crew members, friends and close associates. Even if those connections reach other cities and countries, graffiti writer networks tend to remain insularly oriented. As the following chapter will discuss, there are also graffiti artists who have been able to pursue fulfilling careers through the professionalization of their artistic talents, and still others who use their art to make meaningful connections with marginal communities outside of the subculture while travelling. Although both graffiti and street artists exhibit these network dependent characteristics, street artists seemed more reliant on them, especially in terms of the quantity and quality of those connections in creating possibilities for work and collaborative artistic projects which connect them to social, political, and environmental causes.

By virtue of their willingness to enact collaborative projects with groups and causes external to their own, street artists can help to establish *chains of equivalency* between struggles against different forms of subordination and exploitation. That is, street artists can help make connections between the particular demands of similarly oriented groups using their art as a medium to visually express their claims, helping them to reach much broader and public audiences. It is mainly the connectionist logic underlying these chains of equivalency which create the appearance of a larger social movement. In reality, street artists are helping to make connections between social movements through their activist projects. These defining connectionist characteristics which help to power street art as a counter hegemonic practice, however, also work to mask resistance which could be generated through mural arts projects by reducing all values and reasons for social action to this network

grammar. Seeking projects of any kind –hegemonic or counter hegemonic in orientation –becomes the guiding principle for self-development, employability, and career success. For many street artists in the projective city network, connections become their dominant identifying characteristic: a desire to multiply network connections, and, through a succession of projects, extend those networks to their benefit. Those street artists who choose to pursue these types of projects then may find themselves in precarious and vulnerable positions caught between the imperative to continually be working on projects to extend their network affiliations and influence in order to achieve career success, while also trying to manipulate those connections to pursue meaningful and critical projects that reveal the limitations and contradictions of new capitalism.

Street Artists

Street artists place less emphasis on lettering and signature based art and more on experimenting with various artistic mediums and urban architectural elements. Contemporary street art tends to play with the form and shape of the city to communicate ideas, attitudes, and critiques rather than the aggressive claiming of space seen in graffiti writing. Unlike graffiti writing subculture, street artists do not have any sort of class identifiers like bombers and artists, and there really is no basic type, only different mediums and approaches. The variety of approaches and the spectrum of materials makes categorizing the types of street art difficult, especially as artists are continually innovating and making new ways to communicate their intended messages. Those which have been most popular and widely used by the street artists I have followed throughout the course of my research are stencils *(fig. 2.13)*,[133] wheat pastes *(fig. 2.14)*,[134] and street art murals *(fig. 2.15)*.

Figure 2.13: *Tourist are Terrorist*, Stencil. Vienna, Austria. Photo by Kris Murray (2016)

Although there are no distinct classes –besides novices and veterans –street artists can be described as having either purist or muralist mentalities like graffiti writers. On the one hand, *street art purists* are devoted to clandestinely getting up in the city, with some content to creatively play with city space while others concentrate

on making specific social and political interventions. On the other hand, *street art muralists* are focused more on heroic to monumental applications of street art in a public context. Many paint street art murals as a part of their developing professional careers, while others aim to raise awareness to social, cultural, and political issues or injustices in the world. Street art novices tend to be purist in orientation seeking to get up and get their messages seen, experimenting both with materials and the application of their work to city surfaces. Established street artists tend to be muralist in orientation, continuing to experiment with materials but also seeking to innovate the process of their work and to take to a higher (and bigger) level. Some street art muralists take on more expansive roles beyond the art as artistic directors, event and organization managers, and are interested in working more closely with community and municipal stakeholders to develop more meaningful projects with or around their art. Jason Botkin is the co-founder the street art collective En Masse which has been responsible for numerous artistic interventions in Montreal and other North American cities over the last decade. He has helped to organise major street art events and projects such as Montreal's first Mural Festival (2013) and *Love Letters to the Great Lakes (2016-present)* in Toronto. In fact, many street art muralists that I have spoken to have used their art to engage in meaningful social, environmental, and political critique. Some have done so only once or a few times, while others regularly seek to get involved in projects which have a social, cultural, or political component.

Figure 2.14: Wheat Paste, Miss Me. Under Pressure, Montreal. Photo by Kris Murray. (2016)

Street art purists may also be working towards semi-professional standings in the art world, receiving invitations to exhibit work based off of their illicit campaigns and interventions. In rare cases, street art purists develop professional art careers around their illegal work, ascending to celebrity status in the art world while still retaining their deviant profiles. Street artists such as Sheppard Fairey and Banksy are probably two of the most popular examples. Fairey moved onto to a professional arts career after

Figure 2.15: Street art mural, Rone (crossed). Mural Festival. Montreal. Photo by Kris Murray (2015)

multiple arrests and court appearances for doing street art, while Banksy continues to produce street art anonymously which has become part of the artist's worldwide brand. Fairey first came to prominence in the 1980s for his OBEY stickers and posters featuring the portrait Andre the Giant that he illicitly campaigned all over Washington D.C., Boston, Baltimore, and New York City. He became more widely known in 2008 after he, Ron English and several other street artists organized a grass roots cross country counter culture poster drive across the United States to build support for Barrack Obama's presidential campaign. Fairey recreated a photographed image of Obama with the word HOPE stenciled prominently below it *(fig. 2.16)*. English's *Abraham Obama* poster combined the portraits of Abraham Lincoln and Barack Obama evoking similarities between the 16th president and the 2008 hopeful *(fig. 2.17)*. Their series of interventions that year gained a great deal of media attention and their posters quickly became two of the most recognizable images associated with the Obama campaign. After the election Fairey's image was acquired by the Smithsonian Institute for its national portrait gallery collection.[135] Although he gained

popularity for its use in this campaign, a legal copyright battle over the original image[136] later ensued with the Associated Press that tarnished his reputation.[137] Fairey's OBEY Giant campaign remains a cornerstone of street art's evolution in United States that many artists have emulated in their own attempts to publicly convey anti-capitalist messages and opinions. The iconic symbolism, branding, and simple messages in Fairey's work are also important aspects of how his imagery has managed to connect with the wider public and gain mass appeal.

Banksy began as a graffiti writer in Bristol, Southwest England, in the early 1990s and by the early 2000s had progressed into stenciling and street art. The artist's work often depicts unusual and amusing images of subjects who are either dispossessed of power such as animals –particularly rats and apes –children, the elderly and the poor or subjects who hold powerful and authoritative positions such as police officers, soldiers, popular celebrities and political leaders. Often, Banksy's stencil work is accompanied by an anti-war, anti-capitalist, or anti-establishment slogan or theme. By the mid-2000s Banksy's work had progressively grown more socially and politically oriented, and the artist had begun to travel and paint illicit street art works internationally. Banksy canvasses have sold for hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars and the artist is represented by Sotheby's, one of the largest brokers of fine arts in the world, while still retaining complete anonymity. In some cases, Banksy's street art has been physically removed –cut out of the walls they are painted on – to be auctioned off to celebrity and private collectors.[138]

Figure 2.16: *Hope*, Sheppard Fairey. 2008.

While Banksy and Fairey are indeed highly successful international purist street artists who have used their notoriety to fuel their professional arts careers, most street art muralists build their careers around legal mural work, expositions, and professional applications of their art. Again, these purist and muralist orientations are not mutually exclusive with some established street artists holding more purist attitudes while some novices shoot straight for painting big murals right out the gates. One major difference is that purists and muralists in street art, at least for the most part, do not

have any animosities towards each other like those in the graffiti subculture. At least none that I have seen. Although competition for space is still a constant among street artists as much as it is for graffiti writers, most street art purists and muralists are more respectful of each other's work forgoing antagonisms in favor of collaborative endeavors. Finally, there remain many purists in street art whose work can still regularly be seen in the streets of cities across the globe today, but it seems that there is a growing trend of more and more street artists moving towards monumental muralism and formal applications of their street art. Regardless of these differences, both novice and established street artists tend to focus on using their street art to grow their professional careers in the art world, often building up street credibility as purists and then gradually moving towards mural work and expositions.

Figure 2.17: *Abraham Obama*, Ron English. 2008. Photo by David L. Ryan.

Street Art Muralism

Large-scale outdoor murals are not a new phenomenon and, as discussed in the previous chapter, they have been painted since the 1960s in North American cities. Street art murals, however, can be more than massive, they can be *monumental* in scale. The murals being produced by contemporary street artists have reached magnitudes rivaling skyscrapers, and in some cities are considered to be cultural landmarks in their own right. Claudia Walde (2015) has called the current culture of monumental wall painting the *XXL Street Mural Movement* noting several factors differentiating it from graffiti and street art. Firstly, since street art murals are massive and mostly done with permission they tend to last much longer than graffiti murals and smaller-scale street art interventions. The locations for which street art murals are selected also tend to have

high volumes of pedestrian and automobile traffic making them difficult to ignore resulting in greater exposure for both the art and artists, while expanding the scope of potential audiences. Secondly, street art murals lack the spontaneity that comes with graffiti and street art because they demand a greater level of preparation not only on the part of the artists but also by participating events and organizations, urban managers, property owners, and municipal authorities. Street art murals also present a number of technical challenges related to scale: difficulties planning and designing the mural (prior to and while in-progress), equipment procurement and operation, mechanical failures, inhospitable weather, cost and application of materials, and the heavy physical demands on the artists.

Every street artist brings their own unique style and flavour to their work which has made this genre of muralism so diverse and innovative. It would be a mistake to suggest that a complete catalogue of the types or categories of street art muralism could be accurately presented. Artists are continually inventing and reinventing new techniques and approaches, reaching for bigger and more challenging projects, which take them into new territories and towards new horizons. The street art muralists that I followed incorporated popular culture, figurative, and photo realistic elements into their murals, including portraits of cultural or community figures. Several also paint abstract imagery, supergraphics, and collage. For instance, Fluke, Kevin Ledo and Five8 tend to incorporate portraiture or make it central to their mural work *(fig. 2.18)*, while Phillippe Mastrocola works almost exclusively in abstract. Jason Botkin is more of a full range muralist in that he has produced works that are figurative and realistic involving portraiture but also cartoon and fantastic elements like those seen in the his work with En Masse *(fig. 2.19)*. Borrowing from both street art and graffiti and relying to some degree on traditional approaches, many street art muralists have combined materials, styles and content to produce a wide range of mural arts projects. There is a considerable lack of lettering and name based content in

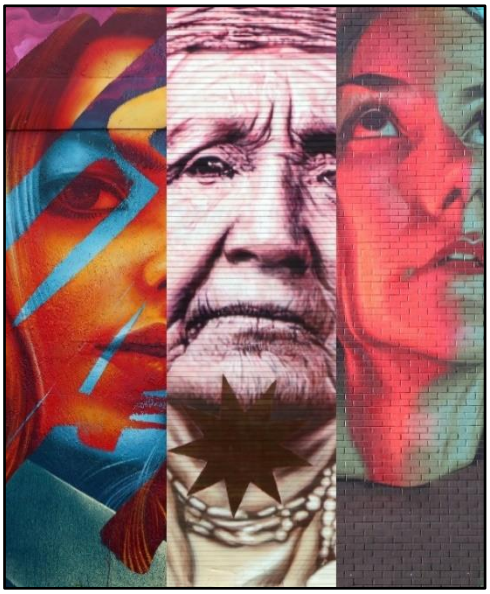

Figure 2.18: Portraiture examples by Five8, Kevin Ledo, Fluke. Photo by Kris Murray.

street art muralism but some artists particularly those from graffiti backgrounds, have brought lettering back into their street art mural work. Artists such as Fluke, and Five8 come from graffiti backgrounds and they routinely combine portraiture and calligraphic (graffiti) style lettering in their murals. Stare is another such graffiti artist that I have documented who has successfully been able to expand the scale his graffiti lettering approaching abstract aesthetics to produce massive and innovative graffiti mural works which are commonly perceived as street art murals. This, however, is not pervasive throughout the street art mural movement, but it is worth noting that graffiti muralists are (re)injecting lettering in creative ways into their works even with the popular shift towards more street art aesthetics.

The scale of mural projects today are far grander than anything attempted historically. Not all street art murals are monumental in scale and there are many which typically measure one to two storeys in size. Generally, any graffiti or street art mural that is under five storeys in height will be considered to be heroic in scale *(fig. 2.20)*. Monumentally sized street art murals –those which exceed 5 storeys high and 40 feet in length –are increasingly more popular, particularly in city centers and cores where building heights typically reach ten storeys and higher *(fig. 2.21)*. The change in scale has created the need to secure adequate wall spaces for such immense street art murals. This can be a challenge with the changing architectural forms of cities today. Buildings need to have open pliable spaces upon which these massive murals can be executed. Modern constructions place more emphasis on glass and steel aesthetics therefore little room is sometimes available to fit such immense murals.

Figure 2.19: Examples of the fantastic and abstract in Jason Botkin and Phillipe Mastrocola murals. Photo by Kris Murray.

Street art mural projects of this scale are also much more logistically difficult to organize and budget as they demand a great deal more materials and paints, appropriate scaffolding or mechanical lifts to reach the higher wall areas, municipal permissions and allowances for the locations, and certified operators for the larger pieces of equipment. In some cases the artists maybe

able to operate the lifts but as street art mural projects reach ever greater heights and sizes even cranes are needed. Artists may not be certified so technicians or operators must be hired for the duration of the mural production. Equipment also needs to be fuelled and maintained which means additional costs to the project. Some of these street art murals can take up to a month to complete which translates into thousands of dollars alone just for these logistical costs. Organizing the artists can also be challenging as they need to be set up at their walls with their paint and materials, given access to lifts or cranes or safety equipment if necessary, as well as instructions on any city ordinances regarding the operation of the equipment. Visiting artists might need to be set up with accommodations and stipends, and if they are international travellers then then may need to be picked up at the airport and brought to the event.

There may also be provincial/state or federal regulations regarding street closures for the use of heavy equipment like cranes and lifts which may change depending on the state, province or country. Artists and organisers need to be knowledgeable in these areas and prepared for any changes that may affect the scheduling of mural projects. As Phillip Marsh, an artist and organiser who works with the Greensboro Street Mural Program in North Carolina, mentioned:

> That is part of the professional experience. You have to know all these things to get the project to completion. If you don't check a box, if you don't know what you're doing, and you may have someone in from out of town and the project gets shut down because you don't do a correct step for three days. That person has allocated a tight installation schedule then that can be the difference between the project being professionally completed and not…if you take three days out of a schedule and they got to go out of town for another job, and they got to leave, then you're in a bad situation. Which means you might A) need to pay them more money to get them to stay because of incurred costs, or B) you may have professional egg on your face because you didn't complete…It may seem like this is fun work and easy work and anyone can do it, but there is a lot of moving pieces.

Logistical challenges with artists can occur especially when mural projects or events take place in short or extended periods like over a weekend or across several weeks. When dozens of artists need to be organized in 48 hours or less there can be a number of organizational shortfalls such as material or paint shortages, equipment failures, schedule conflicts, changes or cancellations that can throw an entire project into chaos. When mural events take place over the course of several weeks or more then equipment costs and rentals can also become expensive and special allowances may be needed from municipalities for extending projects to fit in with ordinances or bylaws.

While these factors certainly differentiate street art muralism from other forms of streets-based arts, what I have learned through my research is that there are also marked differences in how artists engage with their work on a personal and socio-political level. On the one hand, most of the street art muralists I observed had less of a sense of attachment to their finished murals than graffiti artists. Street art muralists take great pride in their work but are seemingly less interested in the longevity of their murals or in having any authority over the eventual repainting of the wall. On the other hand, most of the graffiti artists I observed were deeply concerned with the longevity of their mural works in the city and felt that they should

Figure 2.20: Heroic Street Art Mural, Os Gemos & Blu. Lisbon, Portugal. Photo by Kris Murray (2014)

have some authority over the repainting of their murals. Many went so far as to claim *ownership* of the walls upon which they had painted, both legally and illegally, and that they should be consulted by property owners regarding any changes to their legally painted murals.[139] Moreover, many graffiti writers consider their legal and illegal works to be historically significant to the cities they are painted in, or at the very least, to that of the subculture.

As I will outline in the following chapter, street art murals are popularly painted for urban arts festivals and it is expected that the walls will be repainted within several years, if not the following festival. Street art muralism is generally not considered as contributing to the long term historical project of the city besides that which is accorded to the annuality of the festivals during which they are painted. Street art murals are more likely to be deemed historically significant with respect to the *scale* they are painted in. Still, there are monumental street art murals representing historical

themes and persons for urban arts festivals and mural arts programs which do in fact add to the cultural and historical project of the city. Two Leonard Cohen murals painted in 2017, the first by Kevin Ledo during Mural Festival and the second by Gene Pendon and El Mac through the non-profit mural painting organization MU, are good examples.[140] Many cities are embracing culturally themed street art murals as public arts projects and the muralists who are involved take their contributions to representing these cultural and historical figures and themes seriously. These street art muralists are interested in making meaningful connections with the communities they paint in, using their art to beautify neighborhoods and districts, and

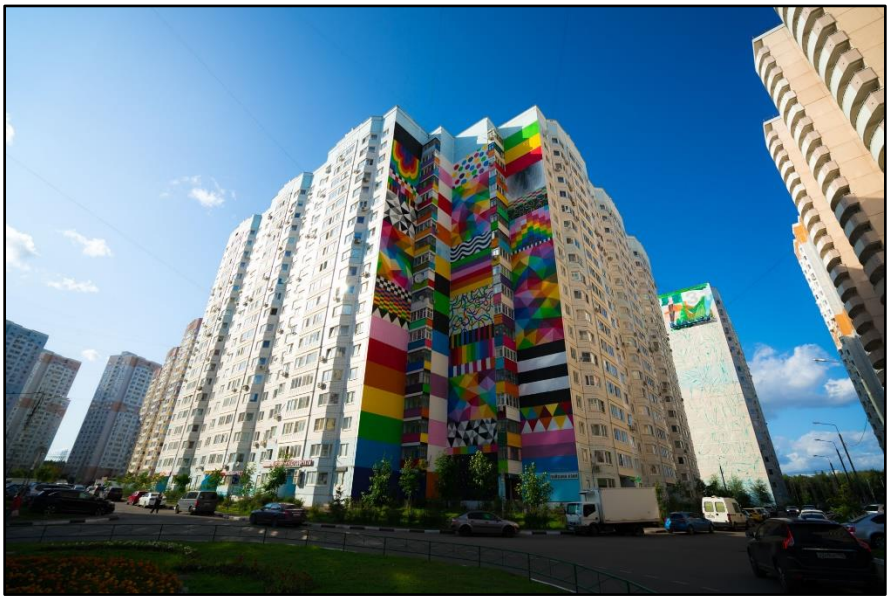

Figure 2.21: Monumental street art mural by Okuda. Moscow, Russia. 2019.

contribute to the historical project of the city. Some also try to raise awareness of social justice issues connected to poverty, racism and discrimination, police brutality, and equal rights. Underlying these motivations, however, are also their ambitions to grow professionally and to further their artistic careers using their mural work to connect them to new patrons and projects. At the same time, street art muralists must also balance any professional or activist agendas with the heavy demands placed on them to paint these massive murals in the first place. So for many street art muralists, there is considerably less time to devote to social or political activism, besides that of any organising group they are painting their mural in conjunction with perhaps. It is these final points that I wish to elaborate upon for the remainder of the chapter.

Over the past decade, Montreal and its surrounding boroughs have made concentrated efforts to produce murals in a variety of contexts through municipal and non-profit programs, with more funds for mural arts projects being ear-marked for beautification,

commemorative, and cultural projects. This has been facilitated by a five hundred thousand dollar subvention in the fall of 2016 by the City of Montreal through the Mural Arts Program with the intent to "create high-quality art, develop local creative talent and add to the city's public art collection, as well as improving borough life."[141] This is true for many other cities and towns across Canada and the United States as well. Incorporating the mural arts into commercial, civic and beautification projects or tourism strategies is not a new phenomenon in North America. There is also much more at stake: the mural projects involve more moving parts, legalities, expenses, and relationships from design to implementation and completion. This means that there is also great deal more planning and preparation involved: large-scale mural projects require approval from municipal agencies which can take weeks or upwards of a month or more to complete, and thousands of dollars to be realized in permits, equipment rentals and artists fees. Sometimes, as the following section will discuss, conflicting mural projects may end up competing for the same funding and support and can create tensions between artists, organizations, and the public. Two monumental commemorative murals produced during the summer and fall of 2017 for the late Leonard Cohen in Montreal provide some context for the challenges of painting street art murals just discussed but also reveal how the neo-management of street art muralism works to suppress artistic radicality.

A Tale of Two Cohen's

It is midway through June and I am standing in a back parking lot on Napoleon Street, just off of St. Laurent Boulevard, in the Plateau neighborhood of Montreal City, watching local artist Kevin Ledo paint on the Cooper building during Mural Festival this year. He is painting a portrait of the late poet, novelist, singer and songwriter Leonard Cohen sponsored in part by the festival and several of its local patrons: le Société de développement du boulevard Saint-Laurent [SDBSL], Federation CJA [Combined Jewish Appeal], Moishe's Restaurant, the parking lot owners in the area, and the owners of the Cooper building. Cohen, originally from Montreal, was a larger than life celebrity who influenced generations of singers, song-writers, and poets through his work that spanned decades. It was only fitting then that a larger than life mural in his tribute would be painted in the Plateau neighborhood where he had lived for a number of years. A fan of Cohen's music and writing, Kevin was happy to accept an invitation to paint a mural to honour the recently deceased artist for the fourth edition of Mural Festival.

This is a *huge* mural. In fact, it is the largest mural that has ever been painted by an individual artist in this city. Standing roughly at 130 feet high (9 story's) off the ground, it is also the largest mural that Kevin has ever painted *(fig. 2.22)*. Even before

there was any paint on the wall, Kevin painstakingly outlined the image with large, oversized markers he had taped to a telescopic painting pole. He superimposed a drawing of Cohen onto a photograph he took of the wall and used the building's 'natural' line features to make a grid map he could then print out and work from. Just the outlining of the mural took him five days to complete. Painting this wall solo is nothing short of a herculean task and by the time that he is done, Kevin will have worked close to 170 hours over a 3 week period, putting in 12 hour shifts almost every one of those days to finish this monumental portrait.

As large as this mural was, it only received a combined thirty-five thousand dollar budget, which is small considering it covers nearly 5,800 square feet (~$6 a square foot). The costs for doing such a large-scale mural like this can be daunting: the enormous amount of paint needed to cover that much area, the crane rental, materials and equipment such as markers, brushes, and other supplies. The crane used was the largest of its type, a 135 foot genie telescopic boom lift *(fig. 2.23)*. The rental for this size and type of crane is typically in the neighborhood of 4500$ a week [not counting fuel].

Figure 2.22: *Leonard Cohen,* commemorative mural, Kevin Ledo. Mural Festival, Montreal. 2017. Photo by Kris Murray.

As well, Kevin had to take a safety course in the use of the crane and Mural Festival paid for an independent crane operator to assist him. The reduced budget certainly made things more of a challenge, but as Andre Bathalon, one of the organisers said, "Everybody was willing to put water in their wine to make it happen for less." In the end, the whole project would be completed on a minimal budget and would require the support of local stakeholders to be realized. Kevin also took a considerable cut to his regular fee, working twice as hard for half as less. Though for him, it is the collaboration with members

of the community he is painting in, or at the very least their participation in the production process of the mural, be it in terms of design, as subjects for the content of the mural, or even picking up a brush to help paint it, are at the heart of his work. A wanton to be a part of a meaningful project celebrating an iconic Montreal artist and the personal challenge of completing such a huge mural were what kept him onboard.

The organisers of the festival had applied to Montreal's Mural Arts Program for municipal funding of this project but were not accepted. Every year muralists and artists apply to the city's Mural Arts Program with potential projects in various Montreal neighborhoods seeking money and support. Proposals for potential mural projects need to be submitted to the Mural Arts Program by the end of February each year so many artists and organizations spend the winter months preparing their respective projects to meet this deadline. With the rise in popularity of street art muralism these applications have grown in both number and in scale. Therefore, artists have had to increasingly compete for municipal funds and approval for mural projects. As it turned out, the Cohen tribute which the Mural Festival organisers were seeking funding for was not the only commemoration project that year. MU, a Montreal-based non-profit community mural painting organization, had also put in a bid for a monumental mural tribute to Leonard Cohen to be painted on the apartment building located at 1420 Crescent Street in downtown Montreal. The Mural Arts Program ended up approving their project and awarding them a record $200,000 of funding. This set a major and important precedent for mural arts in Montreal, one which will certainly have repercussions in terms of the size and funding for future monumental mural projects in the city. It also, however, exhausted a large portion of the available municipal funds for other public arts projects for that year. The wall in which the mural was painted was located on was not street-side, so the artists could not use bucket or scissor lifts and the use of a crane would have been too difficult, costly, and would have disrupted traffic on Crescent Street. Instead, three separate

Figure 2.23: Genie telescopic boom lift. Mural Festival 2017. Photo by Kris Murray.

swing stages were needed (scaffolding consisting of a platform suspended by rope supports which can be raised and lowered) to access the wall area and complete the mural *(fig. 2.24)*. For nearly two full months, Gene Pendon, a local artist from Montreal, and El Mac, a well celebrated artist from the United States, along with a team of a dozen assistants worked to finish painting before the one year anniversary of Cohen's passing. The result was a spectacular and monumental commemoration of one of Montreal's most celebrated artists which is now a permanent fixture in the city's skyline and a visible reminder of its rich cultural and artistic talent.

The Leonard Cohen mural project on Crescent Street was part of the *Hommage aux Bâtisseurs Cultureles Montréalias* (Tribute to Montreal Cultural Figures) series which MU started in 2010. Elizabeth-Anne Doyle, co-founder of MU, explained that the murals in this series "pay tribute to Montreal's great artists...obviously Cohen has always been on the list." As of 2018 twenty murals have been completed for this series, meant to highlight the contributions by these artists not just in their local communities where the murals are produced, but to the culture of Montreal city, Canada, and the international arts world more generally.[142] Elizabeth explained that they usually try to align a tribute mural project with a significant date related to an artist's life or career, "a birthday, the date of a passing away, an anniversary of a book or a first record, something to bring to the narrative...so every year we have a list with dates that are relevant to people we want to pay tribute to." She said that with the Cohen mural they had originally intended to have it coincide with his 80th birthday in 2014. They had begun to plan and organise for the mural as of 2013, well before anyone in Mural Festival had put anything together. Originally they had intended for the Cohen mural to be painted on the upper portion of a 10 storey building on the corner of Prince Arthur and St-Laurent Blvd. but the brick facing

Figure 2.24: Leonard Cohen mural with swing bridges. Montreal Sept 2017. Photo by Kris Murray.

was scheduled for repair so the project remained on hold. In 2015 they were still waiting to hear back from the building owner regarding the condition of the brick face and the following year they did not have the budget to go forward with the project. “So the next date for us was 2017, which is the 50th anniversary of his first record. So that was the plan. And his passing away last November, made it that much more necessary.” By the time that the building owner had followed back up with them, they had already secured the Crescent Street wall and were well into painting the mural.

During the day you could spy the team of assistants as they were adding to the mural as per the instructions of the lead artists. I was unable to access the building and get to the rooftop to engage with them while they were working because the building lobby was locked with a buzzer security door. So in order to get a look at what and how they were going about the project I had to station myself up on the corner of Maisonneuve and Crescent and observe through what I could with my camera equipment. My Canon 6D is a great piece of gear but even with my zoom lens I was unable to anything substantial. Luckily, my handheld Nikon digital camera had an extremely powerful optical zoom feature which gave me some close up shots. I spent several days and afternoons observing their work and taking photos as it progressed. I would take breaks at Restaurant Boustan when I needed. I was not able to document the mural as closely as I had others during my research due to other obligations at the time but the few afternoons I did get to go by but from what I was able to gather it seemed that the assistants and Gene Pendon were doing most of the painting. I did not see El Mac anywhere and the middle swing stage did not seem to be used so much. As it turned out, it was being used by El Mac who apparently prefers painting at night. He was only in Montreal for the month of September, and although they were lucky to get a string of good weather throughout the month – no heavy rain or any wind advisories –El Mac was kept busy every night working to finish his part to of the massive mural.

Figure 2.25: *Leonard Cohen*, El Mac & Gene Pendon (MU). Montreal Sept 2018. Photo by Kris Murray.

Even with the ten assistants, painting a mural of that size was still a gargantuan feat which took them approximately a month of nearly straight painting to complete. Elizabeth mentioned that they got lucky with the weather so El Mac was able to accomplish a good deal of work under the cooler and calmer conditions of the Montreal fall nights. I was unable to speak with the artists directly to gain more insight on the conditions and difficulties they faced painting the mural but surely they had their fair share of headaches and stresses to deal with. Kevin painted his mural alone, and was put through some especially difficult conditions, mental and physical stresses. Even several months later he told me that "this project really wore me thin. That was a huge feat for me, like, I crawled away from it." He may have been laughing a bit thinking back on it, but the painting of the mural actually had a real impact on him at the time. He found himself not being able to sleep properly after being in the bucket lift for so many hours during the day painting. He said it gave him 'sea legs' because it swung about in the wind so often that he had to constantly adjust his footing or adapt to the lift's movement while trying to remain steady painting. The winds during the festival that year were particularly strong and at least one of the days he was unable to use the lift due to severe wind warnings. He said that "I couldn't work at all…There was another day too where we needed to come down because it was too windy and the thing [crane bucket] was shaking around. That was a terrifying project." Even though he was harnessed in and secured to the lift with a trained operator it was still a challenge to make the most basic of movements with the winds buffeting them about. Every time he exited the lift, he needed to take a few minutes to re-orient himself to the ground and his surroundings. Combined with the general soreness of his body from the long work hours in the crane bucket it left Kevin agitated and restless. His inability to get a good night's sleep only added to his overall exhaustion and growing frustration with local media attempts to sensationalize his mural project.

These recent mural arts projects also reveal is that there is much more competition between artists, organizations, municipalities, and other stakeholders to paint murals in cities and communities today. The conditions, stresses, and potential dangers to the health and well-being of the artists is also something that needs to be more closely considered. More artists and organizations are now competing for limited resources, funds, walls, projects, and work on a scale never seen before which engenders growth and innovation, but also less cooperation, collaboration and collective work. Artists are so focused on their singular projects that they are left with no real time to engage meaningfully in anything else because of time restrictions, budget costs, and patron expectations. Proposals and projects are prepared with more secrecy, things are kept more 'hush hush'

between members of the street art and mural painting community. Sometimes there is so much secrecy that artists and organizations which have worked together previously, or who operate in the same areas of the city, do not share their intentions or project proposals and as a result unintentionally interfere with or create obstacles for one another. These competitive tensions between artists and organizations can work to further diminish ties among members of streets-based arts communities.

I asked Kevin if there was any hard feelings between him, MU, and the artists working on the other Cohen mural project. He said:

> No. Not towards them…We cleared things up when we saw each other right away…Because when I found out that they knew about our project but they didn't tell us about their project, and we were applying for funding, they didn't know if theirs was happening for sure and then Coderre announced it without any official notice. Everybody was shocked. And I was like, 'how could [they] not have told me?' But [it] was at the secrecy stage of 'is this going to happen?' But [I] just felt super exposed that I had confided in [them] that we were doing ours…maybe I wouldn't have applied for that funding.

Indeed, the mayor of Montreal at the time, Denis Coderre, was a passionate fan of Cohen's who spoke publicly about finding an appropriate way of commemorating the artist. In early April that year Coderre announced the news via Twitter, "Between now and September, this magnificent wall in downtown Montreal will become a magnificent, 8,500-square-metre mural of Leonard Cohen," he wrote.[143] Kevin's mention that his announcement was not in following of normal procedures was telling of Coderre's political motives. He seemed to be trying to spin this monumental mural commemoration for his own benefit, perhaps to gain favor with Montrealer's ahead of the municipal elections that coming November. It was not the first time that Mayor Coderre had green lit an expensive public art project or commemoration for an artist, but this was certainly the largest. In any case, his move to break the news ahead of any official announcement by the mural program ended up setting off a tirade of criticisms from the public and media regarding its relevance and cost which did not help his position and only complicated matters for the artists involved. An opinion piece in the Globe and Mail called the Crescent Street mural a 'monstrosity'[144] while the Montreal Gazette wrote that it was an 'ill fitting' commemoration for one of the humblest and least ostentatious artists in the city's history.[145] Kevin said that

> When the media started pitting us against each other…He [Gene] messaged me, trying to understand why they wrote what they wrote and he was worried that was going to put his project into jeopardy…I really respect Gene…He and El Mac are like my art heroes. All I could say was 'I'm sorry. I'm so sorry but I can't control what other people write. I didn't say anything bad about you guys.'

Kevin also said that he felt that the media, the Gazette in particular, was trying to pit their projects against each other and it was something that created a great deal of stress for him, and the other artists working on the Crescent mural:

> I don't know El Mac personally. I've met him before, but…it was difficult for a while, we were going back and forth for like a half hour messaging. But in then it worked out really well. He offered to help me. Because in the end I was so stressed out from doing it. All I could think about was doing it. Working 12 hour days. Then one day I wake up and I was like messaging back and forth and I was like 'look dude, I barely have a budget, I'm working like a maniac, I'm sorry that this happened, it's out of my control.' But in the end he was all good and he even, I thought it was a really nice gesture, he even offered to help me if I needed it.

Even though there is this climate of increased competition and secrecy among artists and organizations, Kevin reminds me that not everyone keeps a grudge and that at the end of the day they are all just trying to make a living while doing something creative and positive for the city, the communities they work in, and themselves. Moreover, Kevin may not have applied for funding had he known of MU's intended project, perhaps even offering his labor towards their mural, shows that this increased competition also creates vulnerabilities not just in the system but in and between the artists and stakeholders as well which can have the effect of weakening ties between actors involved and discouraging others from pursuing projects at all. Fortunately this did not happen here, instead Kevin, Gene, El Mac, and the organisers were able to talk about it, clear it up between them and realized that the journalists were the cause of their anxieties, but that doesn't always happen. Kevin said that "As an artist you always want media attention. It obviously helps your career, helps you advance," but that his experience of painting this mural amid all of the media hype created a scenario where he did not want to engage at all in fear of further dramatics. "And here I am like 'I don't have time! Leave me alone!' It was weird and surreal because it's the opposite of what I want."

A Dying Breed

Many street artists are gravitating towards muralism as career and ideology rather than a mode of artistic expression for the social and political voices of the people, like it was generations prior. The neo-management of street art muralism works to professionalize relations between artists and patrons and bring the production of large-scale murals under the purview of institutional controls. This creates a double dependency where, on the one hand, artists increasingly rely on institutional frameworks and permissions for mural projects and, on the other hand, patrons increasingly gravitate towards street art murals as they are legally obligated by municipal bylaws to use formal channels when organizing such projects.

Relations between artists and patrons are heavily formalized and mediated by go-betweens or micro-managers which compartmentalizes and minimizes their interactions with each other. The collaborative relationships that artists and patrons had developed over previous years has largely become client-based. Content is pre-approved and generally non-confrontational or non-controversial which greatly limits the rebelliousness of street art and in some cases severely curtails creative freedoms. This can have the effect of weakening artists' connections to the more meaningful aspects of these projects, putting the focus of their attention completely on production of the mural and their own opportunities. As a result of their narrowed focus street art muralists may be more disconnected to the on-ground realities of the communities and cities they travel to paint in.

Moreover, street artists' growing dependency on regulative agencies and private patronage diminishes the risks that they are willing to take in the politicization of their work. Artists want to impress their patrons, many of which are private property holders, in order to secure the possibility of future work. Although many artists are said to be given creative freedom, it still tends to follow a general theme or color pallet that the patron wants. Artists are much more focused on the process of the production, of refining their methods in order to become more time and cost efficient rather than the deeper meanings or the content of their work. They want to have positive reviews and testimonies from their clients, and a dependable track record in order to be attractive for more work. It is in this sense then that the lasting and meaningful content of murals has become eclipsed by the spectacle of their production.

The formalization of artist-patron relations has also influenced the development of mentorship between them. Mentor relationships in the street art community are more formalized than those in graffiti, often facilitated by the support of institutional patrons such as schools, museums, and arts galleries. They also tend to be based on weak ties and do not endure like the mentor relationships in the graffiti subculture, finding their most concentrated periods during active projects and are tied to the success or capacity of the artist to remain relevant. Once their relevancy disappears so do many of the so-called personal connections with these formal relations.

New recruits therefore are limited to those who have gained relevancy in the digital and or international level, thereby reproducing competitive or *networker* attitudes among street art muralists over time. Street artists increasingly become focused on expanding and developing their own networks for individual success, and building their portfolios as part of their strategies for professional development. Consequently, the danger of street art muralists increasingly being mentored and influenced by

institutional, municipal, and private patronage is that the art begins to conform to the status quo. If art is more about conforming to institutional demands then it is less about making critical interventions and more about *making it big* and growing one's professional brand. Even if street art muralists are not advocating for universal consensus, when their work offers little or no alternative perspectives or ideas to the status quo then they are not confronting dominant hegemony either.

In the process the graffiti subculture has been increasingly pushed to the margins and graffiti artists must conform to institutional standards in order to be considered for inclusion. As street art muralism is increasingly formalised, the graffiti subculture is progressively displaced of its territory and the informal systems of aesthetic regulation produced through mentoring and social organization are diminished. Novice graffiti writers no longer seek to be mentored by established writers which has severed the generational transmission of subculture values and norms. As a result, graffiti writers are less likely to adopt of an alternative lifestyle or career through graffiti muralism and instead seek knowledge and audiences through the internet and social media. Without guidance from the older and more established writers, novices tend to gravitate towards deviant bombing careers and seek infamy through vandalism rather than working towards muralism to be recognized publicly for their artistic contributions to their cities and communities.

The promotion of street art muralism as the dominant form of visual expression in cities today effectively works to sublimate the radicality of graffiti and street art as counter hegemonic practices. Novice writers tend to focus more on purist mentality and there are less and less muralist mentalities being nurtured. This has the effect of increasing tensions in the subculture: novices crossing out kings, breaks in generational relations, and respect for history of subculture that many have worked hard to grow, maintain, and reproduce in new generations to carry them forward.

As urban arts festivals have grown in popularity, street artists are producing less and less counter hegemonic art and are instead painting non-confrontational, aesthetic murals. Street art muralism is perceived more as a platform to grow their professional careers rather than as a mode of visual expression for social justice, environmental, or political movements. Rather than investing into causes street art muralists invest into themselves and their careers. The once small socio-political interventions of street artists have been traded in for massive pretty pictures. Essentially, the message is that putting your energies into a collective pursuit such as maintaining and transmitting subculture values or promoting a social or political cause, building a career informally, or pursuing an

alternative lifestyle are considered to be wasting potential to grow one's individual career and success. The effect is that muralism is increasingly perceived as a professional career pathway and ideology by many artists, especially those novices who are just entering into graffiti and street art. Ultimately, this commoditization of street art and muralism leaves little room for any form of critical social commentary or critique, instead favoring aesthetic, non-confrontational or inoffensive content.

The climate of increased competition and the resources involved means that there is much more at stake for the artists, organizations, municipalities, and patrons. Street art muralism has become *big* business –s*erious* business –and artists are expected to be serious and committed to project goals. Moreover, for many street art muralists, everything becomes about the work itself. Street art muralist lifestyles have become characterized by constant production: travelling from one festival or event to the next, painting murals with little time to engage more meaningfully in anything else outside of the project. The logistics of monumental street art muralism also demand that artists concentrate on ensuring that mural projects remain on schedule and within budgetary restraints. Street art muralists like Jason, Phillipe, Kevin, and Five8, but also graffiti muralists like Fluke and the artists at A'Shop tend to build their itineraries around mural jobs, expositions, workshops, parties and network opportunities (usually one in the same), packing as much as they can onto their plates in an effort to maximize their production time. Indeed, it is overwhelming to paint such massive murals, especially if doing so alone, like Kevin did for his Cohen mural and like many other street artists in these festivals. Muralists seem to have less time to engage more deeply with the possible intersections, implications, or ramifications of their work because they are just so busy getting it done. It is only when the dust clears do they get a more clear sense of these things.

This is not to discount the obvious beautification work that these artists are doing and the well-deserved praise and appreciation they have received. There are countless communities across North America and around the globe that have benefitted from the electric and fantastic celebration of color and style through graffiti and street art. Although street art muralism is increasingly about work and building a professional career, there are still some artists trying to make substantive connections through socially engaged muralism. As the following chapters will explore, some graffiti and street artists also manage to work out creative ways to either combine their professional arts work with socially or politically oriented groups or design a schedule that allows them to pursue both their professional arts careers while fitting in times to do community projects. Even then, artists must often make choices between professional and

activist oriented goals which affects their decisions to continue pursuing socially engaged muralism. As well, the pressure to pursue a professional arts career pushes many street art muralists to seek a connection to the arts community or art world to satisfy these motivations. Still, this should be understood as more of a tendency than an absolute as there are street art muralists who do engage issues more meaningfully through their work, as it has been shown with Kevin Ledo, Gene Pendon, El Mac, and Jason Botkin, among others.

Chapter 3 will expand the discussion into street art muralism and festivals, urban branding, and the growing divides both within the graffiti subculture and between graffiti and street art muralism. The final chapter will expand on the social and political work in graffiti and street art muralism, how successful their projects are, and the challenges they face as they pursue activist agendas in the street art world today. The final chapter will also expand on the context, approaches, and means by which street art muralists are effecting changes on an individually based and micro level and ultimately how street art muralism is growing as an in*formal system of moral qualification* and a *magnetizer and regenerator of collective or public discourses.*

III
Economies of Muralism

I think that the model of street art today, a majority…is primarily derivative work…It's masturbatory. It's self-servicing. It's completely devoid of anything really happening. It operates on an interesting level [though] and I would rather see somebody doing something like that as opposed to the carbon copy advertisements that are hyper saturated in the world around us. –Jason Botkin

What happens when all you have is the pretty shit? Well it fucking loses its soul, that's what happens. –Ms Teri.

Mural Festival, Montreal June 2013

Montreal's first mural festival took place in the summer of 2013 and coincided with the annual sidewalk sale along Boulevard St. Laurent between Sherbrooke Street and Mont Royal Avenue. The sidewalk sale would run as it normally did, but this year it would also include several days of mural painting. Fluke, a local graffiti artist who I have worked with closely over the years, had asked me to come by and document the wall he and some other A'Shop artists were going to be painting for this inaugural mural event. I was happy to oblige as it would give me access to their area and the event under the guise of working on their team with them. I was not officially documenting the festival and did not have a media pass to provide me access to all areas, but that was fine considering that I was more of an informal documenter choosing to work with the artists more directly. Since finishing my master's research in 2010 I had been following graffiti writers and artists locally and abroad, including their participation in graffiti jams and events. My master's research focused on the local graffiti subculture, the formal and informal places and spaces graffiti writing is practiced, and how graffiti writing could lead towards participative modes of citizenship for those who pursue it artistically. Fluke and a number of other artists painting murals for this festival had been participants in that research and I had kept in touch with many of them, following their work and growth as artists and individuals. The year I finished that research Fluke had taken the big leap and founded his own production company specializing in professional applications of graffiti art. Together with fellow graffiti artists and long-time friends Zek and Axe, and the more recent recruit, a fellow named Dodo from France, they had been building up their business and portfolios painting large-scale graffiti murals in the city over the last few years. In a short period of time they had gained considerable attention for having painted some of the largest and most stunning graffiti murals in the city to-date. Two years prior, in 2011, these same artists had painted *Our Lady Grace (fig. 3.1)*, a five-storey graffiti mural in the

Notre-Dame-des-Graces borough. Inspired by the Czech Art nouveau painter Alphonse Mucha, the mural incorporated six panels

Figure 3.1: *Our Lady Grace*, by Axe, Bruno Rathbone, Dodo Ose, Fluke, Zek, (A'Shop). Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Montreal. 2011. Photo by Kris Murray.

illustrating landmarks of N.D.G. The following year they painted *When I grow up (fig. 3.2)*, another massive five-storey graffiti mural depicting a young boy imaginatively playing with toys. Both murals had been supported by the municipal graffiti prevention department and funded by the City of Montreal. Following the media attention and local appreciation for their work, they were hoping to make a big impression again with painting their third large-scale graffiti mural, but this time in conjunction with the festival. It was a smaller building, only four-storeys, but the location was what Fluke called 'prime real estate' being on the corner of Rue de Pins and St. Laurent Boulevard, a heavily trafficked area in the city. The location, event, and subsequent social media buzz would likely go a long way in promoting their brand and helping to secure more work. The guys were all excited to be painting the mural and were looking forward to seeing how this event would unfold, though there were some side

comments about the festival being a little too street-art oriented for some of them.

Graffiti writers and artists are especially sensitive to the recent

Figure 3.2: *When I Grow Up*, by Axe, Dodo Ose, Fluke, Zek (A'Shop). Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Montreal. 2012. Photo by Kris Murray.

rise in popularity of street art over the last few years and the artists of A'Shop all had backgrounds in graffiti to some degree. Tensions mostly revolve around territory, specifically wall spaces. Those in the subculture claim that because of the time and effort they have committed to establishing a culture of graffiti muralism and maintaining relationships with property owners over the years that some of the walls in which large street art murals are being painted should belong to them. Street artists and the rising popularity of street art muralism are seen as a threat to these efforts and graffiti culture more generally as these murals and spaces are integral to the reproduction of subcultural values and transmission of historical knowledge from older to younger generations of writers and artists.

Street artists are viewed by many graffiti writers as lacking in authenticity, both artistically and in terms of lifestyle or background. Many purist graffiti writers and artists I know always invoke the criticism that street artists have not 'paid their dues' on the streets by taking risks and suffering to some degree for their work like they have. The graffiti artists of A'Shop were not all purist in their mentalities, however, they were not entirely muralist either. Since A'Shop had started, Fluke's sensibilities seemed to be getting more liberal in that he was increasingly more open to expanding the scope of what graffiti art and muralism could be applied to. He also saw great potential for graffiti art and muralism in commercial and corporate environments, and he was not afraid to explore the types of applications that lent to or collaborated with street art aesthetics. Zek is a graffiti artist who is able to straddle both painting graffiti on the streets as well as professional graffiti murals with A'Shop. He is beyond his bombing days but continues to paint pieces, productions, and murals on a regular basis. Although he is decidedly a graffiti artist, he seems to have no issue with working municipal or corporate jobs while also painting pieces and productions on the streets. Dodo has a history in graffiti but only really began to get more serious about graffiti writing and art after he moved to Montreal in 2007. Shortly after arriving to the city he connected with Axe and another writer Fleo who introduced him to the K6A crew and the local subculture. It was not long before he was a member of the crew and painting productions with them and murals with A'Shop. He has been with the crew and company now for seven years, during which time he has trained and mentored under Fluke, Zek, and Axe earning himself a permanent position with A'Shop painting murals. Axe is much more purist in mentality holding to traditional values and attitudes from graffiti writing and muralism. Although he appreciates street art aesthetically and is even a fan of some street artists, he does not hold street art in the highest of regards and will always take the graffiti side in any argument between the two. The attitudes of these A'Shop graffiti artists were representative of the larger graffiti community in Montreal, a sort of mixed bag of *purists and muralists*, those who supported the growing popularity of street art muralism and those who wanted to keep to what is considered to be traditional graffiti art. How the organisers of Mural Festival responded to these concerns and attitudes in the graffiti community would be a determining factor in the success of the event.

Grandma Graffiti

Mural Festival organisers had set up a main area in the parking lots just off of Prince Arthur Street across the street from the TD Bank where several walls were being painted and a small stage was set up for musical performances. Kiosks were set up along one side

selling drinks and alcohol and security barriers were placed around the parking lot area to manage the fanfare. I had walked into this main area to observe the murals being painted when I spied Martha Cooper up on the lift with one of the artists at the main wall. I had to take another look. Indeed, it was her. Martha Cooper was in town to cover *our* mural festival? This mural festival was more than just another arts event, it was possibly the sign of something larger developing here in Montreal and I knew right then that I had to put my finger on that pulse. I just was not too sure how I was going to go about doing that. But taking a picture of Martha Cooper at work just about ten meters away from me and digging in deeper to document this festival was a start. I contemplated –struggled –with waiting around to get the chance to meet and introduce myself to her. After all, some of the graffiti writers I had been working with locally had affectionately joked about how I was her equivalent in Montreal having dedicated the last ten years of my research and work to extensively documenting the local subculture. Even though I had only begun to extend my documentation and research to the United States and Europe at this juncture, I did not consider myself to anywhere near her calibre of work, but appreciated the compliments nonetheless. Getting the chance to meet a legend of the graffiti and street art world of documentation, however, was definitely not something I wanted to pass by. After standing there for several minutes waiting for that moment, I decided, begrudgingly, that I would make way my down the street to check out the other walls, get situated, and start doing my rounds. A'Shop was painting just down the street and I wanted to see how they were coming along. Besides, I was sure that I would get the chance to meet her at some point later during the festival.

Martha Cooper is probably one of the most popular and well respected figures in graffiti and street art documentation today. Her work with Henry Chalfant documenting the growing graffiti writing and art movement in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s was ground-breaking and is still, 30 years later, regarded with admiration and respect by many in the subculture. Affectionately called 'the bible', *Subway Art* (1984) was foundational to many of the older graffiti writers I have worked with over the years. Books, popular magazines, and media were the only sources of information for younger writers in the pre-internet 1980s and 1990s. Cooper and Chalfant's *Subway Art* is almost always represented in the personal collections of graffiti writers and is typically among their most prized possessions. Cooper published several other books throughout the years as she continued to document graffiti, street art, and hip hop culture. She more recently gained a renewed popularity in the early 2010s when she began posting and publishing through the social media application Instagram. She continues to document

graffiti, street art muralism, events, festivals, projects, and everyday life, regularly posting images for her 200 thousand or more subscribers on her Instagram page.

After walking through the throngs of pedestrian traffic I finally got to A'Shop's wall on the corner of Rue de Pins and St. Laurent Boulevard *(Figure 3.3)*. The festival organisers had setup several sections of temporary metal fencing around the sidewalk area of the corner to ensure Fluke and his team had adequate space to manoeuvre and their get their work done. Tied to the fencing was a plastic Mural Festival placard in clear block letters identifying them as A'Shop, and, beneath this was their Instagram handle - @ashopcrew –written in Fluke's signature style in spray paint.

Figure 3.3: *Grandma Graffiti* (in progress), A'Shop. Mural Festival, Montreal. 2013. Photo by Kris Murray.

Graffiti writers and street artists had been quick to pick up on the potential of developing social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to promote their work and expand their professional networks. Social media had been around for a few years at this point, but Instagram was an emerging platform that was gaining traction among the graffiti and street art communities. Fluke had realized the potential for Instagram to boost their popularity and connections after finishing *Our Lady Grace* a couple of years prior. The social media buzz that was generated around that mural helped to put them in the spot light and promoted their brand locally and abroad. It was Fluke's hope that painting this mural in Montreal's inaugural mural festival would produce a similar social media hype further boosting the A'Shop brand.

The mural they were painting, *Granny Graffiti* or *Grandma Graffiti,* turned out to be quite fitting considering Martha Cooper was in town to document the festival. Many writers and artists in the subculture have historically looked up to Cooper as the *grandmother*

of graffiti documentation who lived and knew the scene in its infancy. Her celebrity is matched only by that of some the biggest names and artists within the graffiti and street art communities. So having Martha Cooper come to Montreal to document our first street art mural festival was a really big deal. It signalled that Montreal had caught the attention of the arts world, and that it's artists, at least those involved in painting murals and presenting work at the festival, were potentially going to receive greater exposure through her documentation of the event. This type of exposure is something that Fluke and other artists were going to talk to me about and stress over the next several years as being a key component to the growth of their professional networks and livelihoods.

At this particular juncture, however, everyone was focused on the job at hand. The A'Shop van was parked to the side of the wall along De Pins with the fencing effectively cornering off the area. The back doors were open exposing the boxes of spray paint, materials, and other equipment for the crew. A bucket lift had been manoeuvred in along the wall within the fencing, extended upwards with Dodo and Axe busily outlining and filling in some of the initial background and character elements. Fluke was strategizing with Bruno and Hoek about the setup and other logistical details. St. Laurent Boulevard was packed with people passing through, many stopping to take pictures, appreciate the work in progress, and post their images and thoughts to their social media accounts. Several other local writers and artists had also stopped by and were hanging out in the fenced off area with the crew. A few were drinking beers, smoking cigarettes or joints. Although they were painting at an official mural festival, it seemed more like a mini graffiti jam on this corner. I said my hellos to everyone and grabbed a seat on the back of the van. Fluke and the others were going over the mock-up of the intended mural and were planning the night's work.

From what I saw of the mock-up, the *Granny Graffiti* mural was going to be of an elderly woman spray painting in what appears to be an older Boulevard St. Laurent scene. Doves fly around her as an electric mixture of orange, red, and yellow paint arcs into the sky. From her neck loosely dangles a necklace with the emblem of Montreal City. Her dress is cleverly and colorfully encoded with the names of several of the participating artists –Axe, Zek, Dodo, and Apashe –while a closer inspection of the walls on the street reveal Fluke's and another writer, Dock (a friend and well respected graffiti writer who passed away a couple of years prior), as tags on the street walls. A large sign high atop one of the buildings advertises A'Shop. Fluke had invited several other artists to participate: Bruno Rathbone who had helped on numerous other walls and productions over the years including *Our Lady Grace* in 2011, Hoek who's older mural they were painting over, and Apashe who was visiting from France.

I would later find out that Fluke had intended a different design, something Hoek had proposed as he had painted the wall previously. Axe and Dodo had taken issue with Hoek's design arguing that it was not dynamic enough for the event. They had brainstormed and worked on the current design the entire night before and had argued with Fluke over it a good deal in the morning. Apparently it had gotten pretty heated between Axe and Fluke and Axe had nearly walked off the project entirely until Fluke compromised and decided to go with their design.

The argument between Axe and Fluke over the mural was symptomatic of the growing rift between the two artists and long-time friends. A'Shop was starting to grow as a business and Fluke was trying to get them into bigger contracts with the city as well as with private clients which demanded a more mature attitude and approach to their work. Axe had been working with A'Shop since it was founded in 2009 and had been a crewmate with Fluke in K6A for years before that. The two of them had painted countless graffiti productions and murals together over the years, including the annual K6A production or graffiti mural on the main wall of Under Pressure graffiti convention for the last 5 years. They regularly argued about design and content of what they painted together but so did pretty much everyone else at some point or another. Since Axe had been working for A'Shop, however, and the company had been building up popularity and attention in the local scene and media, the two of them seemed to be getting increasingly argumentative with each other. Axe is a traditionalist –a purist –at heart and Fluke was moving away from his connections to the street and more towards commercial applications of graffiti muralism. Fluke was putting much more attention and focus on branding A'Shop, growing their networks, and ensuring there was a steady stream of work and revenue for the still developing company. Axe, on the other hand, wanted to focus more on the quality of the work, keeping it more graffiti oriented and in-line with subculture values. Their differences of opinion and the growing discord between them was also indicative of the growing dissonance between purists and muralists in the community. Axe was also concerned about getting fuller recognition for his work and design as his ideas and direction had been central not only for this mural but also for the previous two high profile A'Shop murals, *Our Lady Grac*e and *When I Grow Up*. Axe felt that while his and the other artist's contributions were given mention, their efforts were overshadowed by Fluke's interests to brand the A'Shop name and further its commercial successes.

At some point later that night Martha Cooper stopped by the wall to snap some photos. Everyone was excited and flocked around her to introduce themselves, thank her for her dedicated documentation of graffiti and street art over the years, and to get a

picture with the living legend. The excitement was palpable. Everyone just dropped what they were doing to meet her. I was equally enthralled but had to wait my turn amid the chaos of the

Figure 3.4: *Grandma Graffiti* (finished), A'Shop. Mural Festival, Montreal. 2013. Photo by Kris Murray.

crowd that had erupted around Cooper. Several crew members had also asked me to take a picture of them with her. I finally got to say hello and we ended up chatting a little bit about our cameras and Instagram. She was posting the A'Shop wall to her account –much to the appreciation of Fluke and the others. It would not be the last time that I would meet her that weekend as we crossed paths documenting the festival at several junctures and got to chat a little more. Looking over the crowd of writers and artists around Cooper, I was glad to see all of them getting to meet her and that her presence signalled Montreal's arrival to the global street art community. At the same time, the rift that was growing between Axe and Fluke, and between purists and muralists more generally, was just under the

surface, slowly bubbling to the top. Even though Grandma Graffiti would turn out quite spectacularly *(figure 3.4)* and help to boost A'Shop's on and offline presence in the street art world, it would be one of the last murals that Axe would paint with them. By the following summer he would leave the company to pursue a more vocational direction painting popular shop murals and getting back to working on his own terms. Although their relationship had changed, Axe and Fluke would remain friends but they could not work together any longer as they had grown apart in their vision and professional ideologies. Fluke was looking towards the future and trying to build a brand around graffiti and street art muralism while Axe was trying to hold onto traditional values of the graffiti subculture, focus on his own art and trajectory, and paint murals through less formal channels. Surely, Axe was still future oriented and not completely lost in the nostalgia of an older era, but the future he saw himself was not one where he was going to become a 'corpo' mural painter.

Creative cities, urban branding strategies, and the mobilization of culture

Urban branding as an economic strategy has become paradigmatic in post-Fordist cities where events and entertainment are promoted as forms of mass consumption. Cities are no longer landscapes of production, but have shifted to economies of service and consumption where culture is mobilized to enhance and expand creative industries and processes of urban regeneration.[146] Many North American city governments have adopted creative city discourses and place-branding strategies which take marginalised or economically stagnant urban areas and refashion them into specialized cultural districts such as those for the arts, music, and museums, but also shopping, fashion, and design.[147] Richard Florida (2014) argues that a revolutionary transformation of capitalism is currently underway where a new economic ethos based less on a dependency on raw materials and labor power and more on human creativity, ingenuity, tastes, and social networks is emerging.[148] Indeed, the Federal government of Canada's mandate since the early 2000s has been to provide resources and support for Canadian cities to develop creative infrastructures and industries. Florida's ideas are heavily referenced in the Canadian Urban Strategy Blueprint which states that "cities and regions have much to gain for making centres attractive to knowledge-based workers who prefer places with a readily accessible range of recreational activities." (2002: 4). The primary goal of these strategies is to improve the image of a city by creating a 'good business climate' enhancing the experiences of urban populations though the construction of cultural facilities, retail, shopping and entertainment centers. Florida (2014) argues that

the creative class seeks out *cool cities* with dense labor markets incorporating interesting and entertaining attractions, WOW factor events such as music and urban arts festivals, dynamic social and cultural scenes, arts districts, and "vibrant lifestyle amenities."[149] David Harvey shares Richard Florida's assertion that cities must appear interesting, "innovative, exciting, creative, and safe" (1989: 9) if they are to attract people to visit, live and work.

The types of innovation, excitement, and creativity that Harvey refers to, however, differs greatly from the recreational forms of cultural entertainment and creative industry development that Florida promotes. Harvey asserts that the neoliberal predilection towards designing the layout of cities in favor of commerce and private interests ignores the needs of a majority of urban populations leading to increased economic, geographical, and social inequalities. The traditional city has been killed by rampant capitalist development, a victim of the never-ending need to dispose of over accumulated capital into endless and sprawling urban growth. According to Harvey, the continual need for capitalism to seek out new resources to refine and produce new markets fuels a perpetual cycle of social and economic crises. The response to these crises is always the same: expansion of capitalist markets into new territories and terrains and the exploitation of resources to refine and reproduce the means to expand even further. Florida's assertion that cities need to exploit their cultural resources to make them more amendable to external investment and attractive to a creative class of workers allowing for the expansion of knowledge-based and service oriented industries follows this destructive logic.

The rise in numbers of urban arts festivals in cities across North America over the last decade is just one of the most recent examples of this expansionist ideology that seeks to find new and profitable terrains for surplus artistic production and absorption. Mural and urban arts festivals have become a popular 'spatial fix' for municipal governments to correct the over accumulation of capital –buildings and infrastructure, deteriorating neighborhoods –by expanding the terrain for consumption through arts entertainment, or in this case *artertainment*, and the spectacle of street art muralism. Districts, festivals and events that involve street art and music are central to the urban cool that Florida says cities must have to attract external investment and the creative class. The spectacle and display of festival events have become central to how cities are advertising their dynamic and creative communities and industries.[150] Quinn argues that since the late 1980s and early 1990s, urban festivals have seen a dramatic increase which "represents cities' attempts to use consumer-oriented, cultural forms to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive, increasingly global marketplace" (2005: 931). Since the early 2000s these urban and mural arts festivals have been

geared towards street art muralism in Europe, while in most of Canada and other parts of North America this shift began to appear about a decade later. After the success of Mural Festival in Montreal in 2013 nearly every major Canadian and American city, and even some townships, have steadily begun to add mural arts festivals to their annual line ups.

By this point street art had already been largely popularized in North America, Europe and other Commonwealth countries. Similar to the community muralists in Chicago in the 1970s, it was institutional acceptance that helped to propel these streets-based arts to higher levels in Montreal and other cities. The local street art group En Masse, for instance, was chosen to do an end of the year exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts from November 2011 until January 2012. The exhibition, *Big Bang: Creativity is Given Carte Blanche*, involved 33 artists from several disciplines, including street art and graffiti, who were given creative freedom to produce an installation in a massive 4200 square foot gallery. The only condition was that the artist's subject had to be something chosen from the museum's collection, to be renewed and reinvented.[151] Over a period of ten days the En Masse team improvised and organically painted every inch of that gallery wall space producing a monumental black and white composition unlike anything that had been done before *(fig. 3.5)*. With free admission to the public, the exhibit was seen by thousands of Montrealer's and tourists. The institutional acceptance and support of En Masse with this exhibition and its success was a historical moment as it was made clear that street art was something that could enhance public perceptions of Montreal as being a city of innovation and culture.[152]

Figure 3.5: *Carte Blanche*, En Masse, Musee des Beaux Arts, Montreal. 2011. Photo by Kris Murray.

Official and public exhibitions display that graffiti and street art, while still characterized as transgressive, have a legitimate place in creative cities discourses and branding projects as productive practices that enhance commercial and municipal value.[153] The growth of creative communities and industries is not just specific to North American, Commonwealth, or European cities either. In the City of Shenzhen and other parts of China graffiti and street art are also being mobilized as a means to brand urban areas, boost commerce and property values, and to attract people to the new developments and neighborhoods.[154] In 2019 the Urban Morphogenesis Street Art Festival was held in Moscow, Russia over the course of a month which invited artists from 26 countries and painted 36 monumental street art murals on as many 20 storey buildings.[155]

Although street art mural festivals and urban arts districts are mostly meant to enhance or compliment tourism and entertainment industries, the use of festivals and fairs to bring attention to cities is not a new concept. Whereas in the past the showcasing of architectural, scientific, technological, and cultural advancements was the primary function of these events, current reasoning for festivals seems to focus on raising the appeal of a city's international profile for external investment opportunities and attracting visitors to boost tourism revenues. In fact, many festivals have come to be regarded as a priority solution for cities aiming to boost local commerce and tourism industries. Moreover, arts festivals project positive images of "sociability, playfulness, joviality and community"[156] as well as creativity and innovation which can be used to superficially enhance the image of a city. Festivals have in large part come to be conceived primarily in terms of economic potential and which has not been seriously examined enough, especially with regards to those which revolve around graffiti and street art muralism.

Civic boosterism is typically managed by local chambers of commerce or organizations of local commercial, industrial and finance interests called business improvement districts or associations (BIDs or BIAs). These organizations concentrate the financial power of local business interests to influence decisions for municipal land-use. With support from BIDs and BIAs, urban arts festivals and districts have found a place in urban branding strategies, but have also become "subjected to the same profit imperatives by the markets."[157] Urban arts festivals are not just expected to improve the appeal and quality of life in a given area, there is also the expectation that local commercial activity and revenues associated with tourism and heritage industries will see improvement as well. Unlike other more generalized branding strategies which are applied to larger sections, if not entire cities,

urban arts and mural festivals are focused on specific neighborhoods, districts, and areas of the city.

There has been considerable research done with concern to consumer attitudes and behaviors and how they are either complicit with or resist creative city discourses and urban branding strategies.[158] This chapter examines how graffiti and street art creatives meaningfully relate to and co-produce these commercial and consumerist urban spaces. Spaces of consumption are not the result of one-way power relationships, they are products of negotiations between stakeholders, consumers and producers, elitist and non-elitist individuals and groups. In *Rebel Cities,* Harvey argues that the city belongs to everyone, not just the capitalists, and it is the collective right of all people "to change and reinvent the city" (2012: 34) in their own image. The right to the city is a collective right because it depends on the collective will and exercising of power and resources to accomplish things. It takes more than just an artist to paint a mural and arts festivals involve many volunteers, , organisers, administrators, property owners, politicians, and community members to make them happen and to ensure that the work is preserved. Street art muralism and urban arts festivals then can also be spaces which galvanize community members, providing focal points around which community and political action are encouraged rather than dissuaded.

This chapter also aims to extend debates surrounding urban redevelopment and regeneration projects, entrepreneurial forms of governance, and creative cities discourses. The hard branding of streets based arts through these mobilizations can be understood as contributing to an *economy of muralism* which both constrains and enables this collective right to the city. On the one hand, entrepreneurial forms of governance and economic development central to urban branding and boosterism projects operate to manage, control, standardize, and commodify informal and illicit streets based arts, including any radical socio-political tendencies they embody. On the other hand, they create new opportunities for artists to connect to public audiences and communities engendering meaningful engagement and participation. Central to this chapter are several research questions: H*ow are street art and graffiti muralism being refashioned as regenerating and magnetizing forces in cities today? In what ways are urban arts districts and festivals contributing to an economy of muralism? How do stakeholders navigate the changing urban artscape and negotiate for or make claims to space and place within the context of creative cities discourses and urban branding projects?*

Notes and interviews with artists and organisers are drawn upon from my extensive fieldwork in the cities of Montreal and Miami between 2013 and 2017 to reveal that these processes are relational

and bottom up as much as they are structuring and top down. Opposing discourses about place, identity and history were also overlapping and contradictory to one another creating tension and discord among locally and internationally based actors. Understanding how and where these competing discourses and ideas of self and the city either converge or deviate can help to better articulate power relations between competing hegemonic groups in the city and why subcultural resistance to these urban development and rejuvenation projects continues to persist.

From Wynwood to Montreal (And Back Again)

The organisers of Mural Festival are a local marketing and promotion company called LNDMRK ('Landmark') who specialize in creative and artistic branding solutions. Up until 2013, LNDMRK had only done some smaller events in the community, such as parties, exhibitions as well as 'artistic activations' where graffiti and street art are used to enhance audience experiences at music or professional events. Over the last few years they had also started to get involved in street art mural projects with commercial and government clients to embellish or beautify urban spaces in Montreal. LNDMRK's use of graffiti and street art to further their branding strategy did not go unnoticed by many in the graffiti community who viewed this opportune use of these streets-based arts with suspicion. Although a number of local graffiti artists were featured in the inaugural festival line-up, there were those who still had reservations as to what LNDMRK's overall goal was with this event. One of the main sources of criticisms was the seeming lack of any authentic connection to the streets. Many were asking, "Who are these guys?" No one had ever seen them painting at a jam or event. They were not artists, they were marketers, and here they were putting on Montreal's premier street art mural event? Montreal already hosts the largest and longest running graffiti art and Hip Hop event, Under Pressure, which has been running successfully for the last 20 years and there are several other similar events which take place annually as well. So many writers and artists remained skeptical of the organiser's intentions and even their ability to pull it off. Still, graffiti writers and artists were happy to accept invitations to paint as it would at the very least guarantee a large and well placed wall for them to get up and be seen.

As it turned out, LNDMRK was not oblivious to these concerns. Trying to be aware of the local graffiti writing culture they included a number of local artists in the lineup for the opening year. Andre Barathon commented:

> We're trying to respect, the [graffiti] community because…it's part of the history. It's something that makes sense to us because we want to make the talent shine. In Montreal, often the talent that is able to create large walls, most of the time, comes

from graffiti…We did it not only because it was necessary…but it was also a way for us to say that we are not here to steal anybody's thunder or we want to make sure that we understand that street art comes, in a way, from graffiti.

About half of the contributing artists were local and the other half were international coming from Europe and the United States. They came from a variety of backgrounds, but most shared a connection to either graffiti or street art. Artists from the local scene included Fluke, Axe, Dodo, and Zek along with guests Arpi and Apashe (representing A'Shop), Stare and Tchug, Chris Dyer, Jason Botkin, Labrona, Omen, Other, Astro and Paria Crew, Wzrds GNG (Wizards Gang), Stikki Peaches, Le Bonnard (Olivier Bonnard), and then Scan, Nixon, Vilx, Five8, Befor, and the En Masse Collective all collaborating on the main wall in the central area of the festival. International artists included Reka One from Australia, Pixel Pancho from Italy, Escif and Ricardo Cavolo from Spain, Fin Dac from Ireland (based out of London), Roa from Belgium, Phlegm from the U.K. (Britain), and finally A Squid Called Sebastian, LNY, Gaia and Christina Angelina from the United States.

Andre explained that Wynwood and Art Basel were the inspiration which got them thinking about bringing a street art mural festival to Montreal. He and one of the other co-founders, Yan Cordeau, had been working for Cirque de Solei between 2008 and 2011. They had been hired for an artistic marketing campaign to re-design and re-imagine promotional posters for some of the touring shows. He says that the idea was to have "artists from various cities revisit the posters and create their own version." They started looking at cities across North America and Europe searching for artists and galleries who they could sign up to their campaign but they quickly realized that logistically it was going to be a challenge. After some research they concluded that a trip to Miami for Art Basel in 2009 could offer them an easier way to connect to the street art world they needed to tap into. "One of the places where we can find many galleries from around the world in one place was Miami. So we were like, 'ok, rather than visit 12 countries let's just go to Miami and see if we could find the proper galleries to work with."

He said that at that point Wynwood was mostly just an empty corridor between two arts fairs, "a weird place…full of garages, tires, [and] wig warehouses." The neighborhood looked miserable, with many areas in disrepair, rough sleepers and hard drug users were visible in many open lots and along the side streets to the main avenues. "There was only one restaurant, which was an awesome place, it was a chicken jerky…But there was nothing happening there at all." While driving around the district they came across a wall being painted by artists associated with Primary Flight and the Goldman Group. Andre says that what appealed to them most was the production of quality graffiti and street art, the creative output

done in such an informal setting, "art outside with all the glam, [but] without all the money. Just for the sake of creating outside." They got to meet and talk to the artists and organisers about how they made the walls happen, and how their work was being received by the community. "We fell in love with the whole process…artists gathering at the same place…creating in front of the public…and that the output, the outcome of that is accessible all year long, 24/7."

They started to attend Art Basel on a yearly basis between November and December. While they were there in 2011 they happened to meet up with a local Montreal arts collective En Masse and were able to help organise one of the main walls for the Primary Flight arts fair that year. *(fig. 3.6)* "We were picking artists from

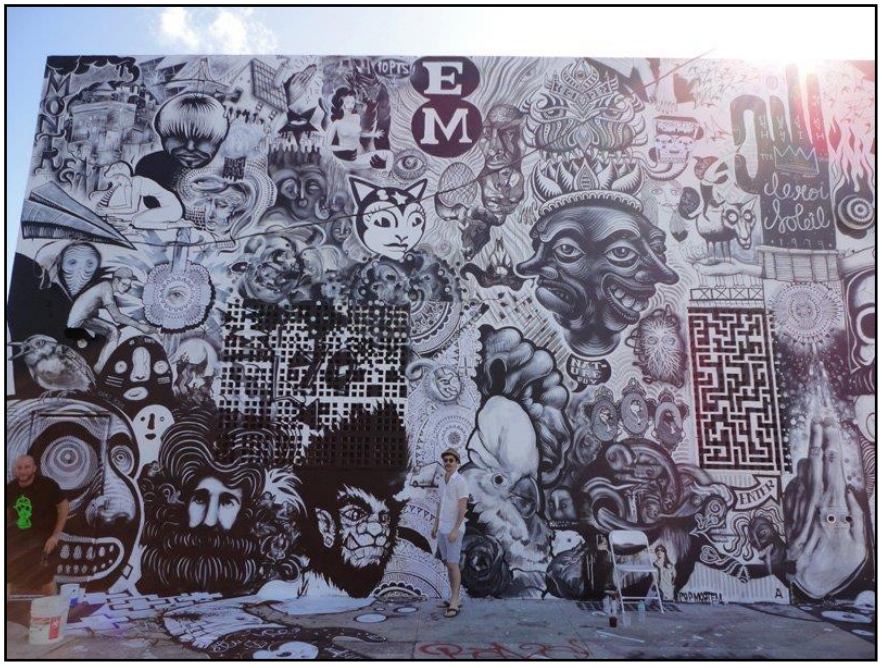

Figure 3.6: En Masse mural, Wynwood Miami. 2011. Photo by Beau Stanton.

Miami but also from all over the world so at the end it was like 35 artists working on that wall." The wall had come together rather organically and on a shoestring budget, and it was a profound creative moment for them. "It was awesome, a great experience, and everyone was doing it with their own money…But we realized, why not just do it in Montreal and invite all those friends so we can…recreate that same vibe? And so that's what we did." Jason Botkin, one of the founding members of En Masse, was in Wynwood that year and was also involved in those first conversations which led to realizing the event in 2013. When I spoke to him he had implied that he had been a strong influence in the decision to go for it that year in Montreal. He says that he got back from Basel in 2011-12 he worked with LNDMRK to try to organise it and make it happen but they just did not have the resources or connections at that point.

After they got back from Art Basel in 2012 he said that they were all so energized and had made the best of developing a proposal for the city and sponsors, “There was nothing stopping us. Boom.”

Andre mentioned, however, that there were some things that they wanted to tweak and change if they were going to host a similar style event in Montreal. “You know the whole feeling of not knowing where is what, at what time is what, is there a bathroom?” Art Basel was exciting and spectacular but it was also poorly coordinated between the events, walls, gallery exhibitions, and installations. I have heard other artists call the scene there ‘cliquey’ in that you need to know the right people, have the right connections, be ‘in the know’ about what is happening if you want to keep up to speed in Wynwood, especially during Art Basel. I could certainly agree with that. When I was there for Art Basel in 2016 there were shows, exhibits, and parties that we did not hear about until an hour before they were starting, or later, almost every night. The way Andre and Yan saw it, they could organise something in Montreal along similar lines, “So we decided, how about we do something in Montreal? Like 2 or 3 walls, and we brand it.” He recognizes that Under Pressure has “paved the way big time for that kind of initiative” but he wants to make something more accessible to the wider public, something that could “create a gateway” where the public could get acclimated to other less acceptable forms of street based arts like graffiti.

> I want you to understand the beauty of a sticker over a stencil or a tag. But before doing that, I need to bring you there and you will never get there if I am bringing something that is really hard to accept…How about we create gigantic masterpieces, that are more related to muralism or to fine art but done by people with skills that come from a graffiti background.

The challenge, besides raising the capital to fund the events, was a logistical one and a lack of experience in the production of large scale arts events. They knew that sooner or later someone else, perhaps a corporation, was going to make a proposal for an event, and they wanted to get ahead of that. “We were scared that someone else would do it. Our biggest fear [was] that Red Bull would do it. So before a company [did] it we wanted to do it first.”

Andre remembers when Wynwood used to be less complicated and more openly collaborative, “It used to be you just go there and paint on a wall and that’s it…I think that the balance has changed a lot.” He says that there has been a shift towards real estate and development more than the celebration of the art. “Every year there was more players in the game. There were more owners, more projects…an area that used to be empty now had constructions or a building that was there was now being spoken for condos.” Ultimately, he says that “it creates some kind of weird chemistry.”

Property owners and redevelopers know artists are eager to find walls to paint. They offer walls to artists knowing that it will bring them more attention and likely raise the urban cool of the area, helping to boost the appeal of their property. “Art brings coolness, coolness brings promoters; promoters bring gentrification, then kills the art,” Andre says. Although the artists and owners benefit from limited exposure, “they raise of value of that neighborhood. I mean, it went from having one chicken jerky restaurant,” which, he reminds me, closed its doors a couple of years back because it was unable to afford the rising rents in the area, “It’s high class restaurants now.”

As much as property owners and developers have taken advantage of the creative and artistic ingredients in Wynwood, artists are not unaware of their own contribution or value to the ongoing processes of urban development. Especially more so recently as artists have had time to observe the changes in the neighborhood over the last decade. Still, there are many who are seemingly more instrumentally driven in recent years. Andre says that it has changed the attitude and culture of Wynwood, “it was fun, then it became, I think, opportunity driven.” Competition for space has also increased as thousands of artists descend on Wynwood during Art Basel every year. Artists are lining up to paint walls so there is a great deal of hustling that occurs, on the spot negotiations and deals sealed with spit and firm hand shake. Artists see Art Basel as an opportunity to get noticed by gallery owners and collectors and to become relevant in the art world which emanates from Wynwood. The event is seen as a platform to expand one’s professional networks, promote and sell one’s art, and see the trends which are influencing current artistic directions. Andre sees the value of promoting artists and their work through these events but thinks that Wynwood is not necessarily the model to emulate. Rather, he sees it was a model they can learn from to produce more sustainable events reflective of the local arts scenes they are borne from. “We’re trying to use the Wynwood experiment to show people the good and the bad, what you can do in a good way, [and] what happens when you don’t keep that balance alive.”

Economies of muralism: Hard branding streets based arts

New forms of capitalism seek to rearticulate creativity and extend its application to not just aesthetic projects but to those which are entrepreneurial as well.[159] Since the 1970s there has been a symptomatic reorientation of attitudes towards entrepreneurial approaches which have become increasingly embedded into the frameworks of urban economic development projects.[160] So much so that even subversives and subcultural actors have become implicated in the very processes of capitalistic development of culture that they have been trying to resist over the last thirty years. In much the same

ways that fashion, design, and architecture have been reoriented to compliment creative industry development and urban branding strategies in North American cities, street art muralism has also been mobilized towards projects of urban and economic renewal. Creative cities discourses and urban branding strategies aim to absorb street-based arts, to produce and curate them as a form of entertainment, as colorful and dynamic backdrops to the place-making and reconfiguring of inner city neighborhoods and city centres. Through this process, street artists are emphasized as being agents of economic renewal and development, actively and creatively reshaping and reorienting urban spaces, making them more interesting, dynamic, and valuable.

In Montreal, the transition point for entrepreneurial forms of governance and urban branding strategies was the early 2000s after the publishing of a report by urban economist Richard Florida (et al 2005) on the creative potential of the city. Next to Toronto, Montreal was ranked as having the second largest creative core workforce in the country. According to the report, 1 in 4 workers in the city are university graduates, most people are bilingual, and the population density is third largest in North America following New York City and Boston. Although finance, insurance, science and technology sectors were expected to grow considerably, so were the arts and cultural occupations. According to Florida's analysis, about 1 in 3 workers in Montreal fall into the creative class, and the number of artists in the city is about one and a half times that of the Canadian average.[161] Geographically, Montreal is the closest major Canadian city to the USA border and Continental Europe, facilitating travel in between cities, enabling "multinational connections across which ideas and innovations can flow."[162] The original diffusion of graffiti culture from New York City to Montreal was likely facilitated by this geographical proximity. The entrepreneurial shift in attitudes in the graffiti and street art communities in Montreal was evident when Fluke and several local artists founded A'Shop in 2009 and began painting murals commercially. Although A'Shop had been painting large-scale graffiti murals in Montreal for several years, it was not until LNDMRK produced the first mural festival that the larger applications for graffiti and street art muralism in relation to urban branding also began to be realized.

Attitudes and strategies which emphasize the extension of urban governance through entrepreneurial logics and programs eventually spill over to the informal sector in the search for alternative markets and resources. Recent moves to absorb local street-based arts communities into these projects is perhaps one such example of this process at work. There is a particular 'can do culture' and attitude that the arts embodies, especially with street art and graffiti muralism, which goes hand-in-hand with entrepreneurialism.

Indeed, graffiti and street artists have been hustling to find walls and commission jobs, working with limited resources and budgets, and building relationships with local property and gallery owners for years. Graffiti and street artists also embody a particular logic of self-branding in their work which makes them a good fit for participating in events that contribute to the re-branding of urban space. Moreover, those who are more entrepreneurially oriented, tend to better understand the language and culture of this form of governance and are more likely to be engaged by commercial and government interests who are interested in developing these artistic resources. Evidence of entrepreneurial logics informing the hard branding of street art and graffiti muralism can be seen in the rise in popularity of street art festivals and arts districts in North America, like Wynwood Miami and Montreal, but also Los Angeles, San Francisco, Moncton, Halifax, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Houston, and Denver.

The *hard branding* of street art and graffiti muralism is an attempt to reconfigure the symbolic attributes of places in the city to create unique urban experiences for locals and tourists alike. Street art muralism is presented as introducing "order, certainty and coherence into an unruly landscape, making it easier to 'read'"[163] than the overly cryptic, messy, and incoherent graffiti. The ultimate goal is to brand the city as a street art destination, or more so, as a *street art capital* of the world. Urban arts festivals and the murals they produce become icons and magnets for post-industrial creative cities, perhaps creative urbanity itself.[164] The same logic that sees store brands having become more popular and valued than the products or services that they sell[165] can be applied to street art muralism. Tourists and appreciators flock to monumental street art murals simply to witness them, and, even then, they tend to do so during events and festivals when they have not even been completed. Publics are not just drawn to the spectacle of street art murals, but the *spectacle of their production.* Publics and appreciators live vicariously through the witnessing of street art murals as they are produced. Capitalism has become so convoluted and has been folded onto itself that even the mode of artistic production is consumed wholesale. *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005) sees many things collapsing onto themselves, and consumption knows no limits.

Most often the first and necessary step to branding an urban area is renaming it and defining its new boundaries concurrent with the establishment of new local cultural institutions.[166] In Wynwood Miami, for example, the development of a new arts district was built around an existent street art and graffiti mural project, *Primary Flight*, which had started developing an outdoor museum of graffiti and street art mural works in 2007. Headed by Books Bischoff, Primary Flight cataloged and curated walls, invited artists, and raised

funds to produce mural projects and exhibitions between 2007 and 2010. At this time Wynwood was mostly still a rundown textiles and manufacturing district, The inaugural exhibition in 2007, titled *Miami's First Curated Street Level Group Exhibition*, included 26 artists, organised and curated by Bischof –a graffiti and fine artist – Anthony Spinello, a Miami Gallerist, and Lynn Yohana Howard, a New York City curator. The success of this exhibition led to a larger follow ups with some 80 artists participating in 2008 and 125 artists in 2009.

Art Basel had already been slowly colonizing Wynwood since its inception in 2002. Real estate developers like Tony Goldman, responsible for the redevelopment of New York City's SoHo and Miami's South Beach in the 1980s and 1990s, were purchasing properties in the district. Bischoff took advantage of the growing popularity of Wynwood to showcase street art and graffiti muralism and to bring attention to many of the often overlooked artists from the streets scene. Working with property owners and developers, including the Goldman's, Primary Flight was able to secure dozens of walls throughout the district to produce a number of large to monumental street art and graffiti murals. "The idea was simple — artists would use Wynwood's nearly unlimited outdoor surfaces for painting murals. The neighborhood's natural landscape provided the perfect canvas for reconceptualization as monumental works of art."[167] The idea was to bring attention to the neighborhood and at the same time establish themselves and their art. The public could meet and interact with the artists and organisers, ask questions, learn about graffiti and street art, see how it was produced, and experience the arts in the streets as opposed to the curated galleries of Art Basel. These street art pieces were also curated, but it was a more organic and public setting which invited audiences to not only observe the artworks, but engage with the artistic community.

The district began attracting more outside investment, arts galleries, retail stores, antique shops, bars and clubs, restaurants, bakeries, and other small shops started to pop up throughout the area. Goldman, who began purchasing properties in 2004, established Wynwood Walls and the Goldman Global Arts Gallery[168] in 2009 with New York-based Gallerist Jeffrey Deitch as a private and enclosed outdoor gallery. The Goldman's invited artists such as Os Gemeos, Sheppard Fairey, Futura, Barry McGee, and Swoon, some of whom had been involved with Primary Flight from the start, to paint in their exclusive gallery location. This move to develop an elite street art space in Wynwood ran contrary to the mission of Primary Flight to create an open outdoor museum. In 2011, Primary Flight grew disillusioned with the direction that the Goldman's, other gallerists and developers were taking in the district and discontinued their annual arts fair opting instead to rebuild in

downtown Miami. Since then, Wynwood Walls, the Goldman Global Arts Gallery, and other developers and entrepreneurs have cemented their positions in the district. Wynwood Walls is now recognized as one of the largest collections of outdoor graffiti and street art murals in the United States and is considered to be one of the country's most successful arts districts.

Wynwood Arts District has also become the central location of Art Basel Miami. For years the arts fair had been slowly colonizing the district but with the support and capital of the Goldman's and other real estate developers, these efforts have were accelerated. For approximately two weeks at the end of November until the beginning of December, the arts district manages and curates dozens of emerging and recognized artists across a variety of platforms and venues such as pop up galleries, expositions, artistic and musical performances, installations, and mural arts projects. Each year The Wynwood Walls and Arts Gallery also exhibits an outdoor collection of the most recognized and innovative national and international artists which has included some of the most notable names in the graffiti and street art world. Additionally, Art Basel Miami hosts a massive commercial arts fair where artists, organizations, galleries, and collectors converge to promote events and either sell or purchase artistic works. According to the Goldman's, the goal is to sell art, and facilitate the connections between galleries, artists, and collectors. Alongside and concurrent with Art Basel are a number of informal events, installations, graffiti, and street art mural projects that take shape as countless artists from the USA and abroad descend upon the arts district during the month in hopes of painting murals, making connections, building their networks, and getting noticed. Property owners in the district besides the Goldman's have been conducive to proving permission for street art and graffiti murals on their walls, namely for the added attention and pedestrian traffic it could afford their establishments. The district also concentrates and centralizes the resources, facilities, and creative spaces for artists and other developing professionals who need to grow and mature their capacities and talents. This unique mixture of informal and formal mural and arts projects, events, and collaborations with municipal and private support and sponsorship is what makes Wynwood Arts District one the most dynamic graffiti and street art scenes in the United States today. Art Basel Miami and the Wynwood Arts District have quickly become the model to emulate with similar venues and districts taking shape in other North American cities such as Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Houston, Philadelphia, Port Coquitlam, Vancouver, and Montreal, among others.

As Andre noted, Art Basel and Wynwood were the direct inspiration for producing a mural festival in Montreal. His knowledge of the tensions and contradictions which came out of the Wynwood model, especially between those in the graffiti community and the Goldman Group's hostile takeover, informed his decision to

Figure 3.7: Wynwood Arts District. 2019.

include many local graffiti artists in the yearly line ups. In this way, the active participation of local establishments tied to graffiti and street art have been drafted to help see this creative urban branding strategy take shape. Besides LNDMRK, local graffiti and street art galleries, work spaces, mural production companies and organizations such as STN16 (located on the immediate premises of Mural Festival providing a direct physical link to these developments), Art Gang, MU, local business and property owners, all contribute to providing network connections, locations, gallery and work spaces, walls for murals, food and drinks, equipment and expertise. In bringing these stakeholders and creatives together the festival helps to grow relationships and trust among them. It also works to professionalize the practice of street art muralism and the arts scene more generally among these establishments and in the city. The individual actors who take on roles as managers and organisers are then meant to encourage others stakeholders, property and business owners, and artists from graffiti, street art, design, and fine arts who may not necessarily be completely sold to "conform to models of creative citizenship encoded within an entrepreneurial regime of governance."[169] For instance, when LNDMRK sends out volunteers or project managers to talk to property and business owners about having one of their walls painted for an upcoming festival, they will explain the benefits of having a street art mural on their property. In the production of a 'culture of street art muralism,' stakeholders (municipalities, festival organisers, and artists) seek to

normalize practices of Montreal businesses by establishing procedures and frameworks. This contributes to the formation of an economy of muralism in the city which, much like the design strategy pursued in the early 2000s, "intervenes in the economy in new ways, involving private actors and constructing new forms of subjectivity."[170]

Urban Arts Cadres and Bottom up Branding

Urban branding strategies are not always elitist and top-down but can also be bottom-up and participatory. When looked at this way, urban and place branding strategies can be understood as social constructions resulting from, and maintained by, social interactions between interested and invested social actors.[171] These strategies of economic development then are not rigid constructions but are instead constantly "negotiated between differentially positioned actors."[172] In terms of urban arts festivals and districts, it is the concentrated and interested efforts of subcultural and community stakeholders in graffiti and street art who have been instrumental in the maintaining of relations between these communities, and who continue to work at making sure that each is given its recognition and place to be expressed in the city. Historically, the agency of street art and graffiti muralists have been ignored in favor of the structuring effects of public and corporate policies. Graffiti and street art remain illicit and problematic forms of vandalism which are generally deemed inappropriate, in need to being removed or erased, and aggressively policed. With the rise of economies of muralism, however, discourses surrounding these illicit street based arts have shifted to the celebration and reverence of their legally sanctioned forms. Moreover, municipalities, private sponsors, and property owners have embraced street art muralism over graffiti muralism, uplifting the former type and its artists over the latter exacerbating tensions between the two communities. Many on the side of graffiti have seen this as just the clever re-appropriation of culture, or the piggy-backing on corporate moves, while street artists have been more open to pursue these new opportunities for work and advancement. Regardless of their positions, both graffiti and street artists are active participants in the creation and promotion of creative cities, urban arts districts and festivals. Street artists, by virtue of the scale of their works, have become implicated in the construction of the visual landscape of the city, literally becoming part of the city's skyline. The monumental street art murals of Leonard Cohen painted by Kevin Ledo in the Plateau, and then by Gene Pendon and El Mac in the fall of 2017 on Crescent Street are more recent examples of this seen in Montreal.

Some authors argue that government oversight is needed to ensure that there are a range of local stakeholders involved in the

decision making processes of urban branding strategies. Mouffe (2013, 2018) asserts that institutional partnership is necessary in the development of agonistic forms of political engagement and that radical democratic practices cannot be realized without some level of formal organization and support. There is the risk, however, that entrepreneurial forms of governance and urban branding strategies will end up privileging only those private actors who have the resources, finances, and networks to produce projects of rejuvenation.[173] Entrepreneurs and consultants, who are regarded as positive and hopeful figures in the process of rejuvenation are given a seat at the table and a voice, "while the voices of others are left out of official versions."[174] Ultimately, urban arts festivals need to be conceived of more holistically if we are to successfully unlock the greater potential they offer to improve the quality of life in cities.[175] It is important, now more than ever, that festivals engage more substantially with the lives of people in the city rather than focusing solely on the rejuvenation and regeneration of the city itself. The true source of renewal in communities are the people, those human elements from which tolerance, appreciation, and community derive, and to whom culture matters. If festival organisers hope to have their events continue to bring meaningful content to cities as well as boost local commerce, then they need to be aware of, and appreciate, the local supply of artists and be flexible and adaptive to social or cultural circumstances, attitudes, and tastes.

One way of doing this is to engage more substantially with local artists, organisers, and entrepreneurs who have positioned themselves as urban arts managers and leaders of graffiti and street art cadres. They have strong ties to local subcultures and arts communities, and can act as mediators between institutions, municipalities, private sponsors, special interest groups, subcultures, and communities to better negotiate land and brand-use for festivals and events. By doing so, they ensure that the interests of local groups are properly appreciated, represented, and afforded a voice in decision making processes. Urban arts managers also ensure that subcultures and smaller arts communities retain some level of continuity by inserting themselves into the historical project of the city through their participation. In Montreal, entrepreneurs and organizations who manage art galleries, workspaces, and mural painting firms like Andre (LNDMRK), Fluke (A'Shop), Scien and Klor (123Klan –STN16), Senk (Art Gang –AG Crew), Jason Botkin (En Masse), and Elizabeth (MU), are representative of these important urban arts cadres. These cadres can be further categorized into formal and informal types, with the latter being based in graffiti and subcultural relations (ex: Art Gang and 123Klan, but also many large crews, like K6A, that have resources and work knowledge to

produce large-scale murals) and the former being institutionally oriented (ex: A'Shop, En Masse, and MU).

These categorizations are also not mutually exclusive, and there are several urban arts cadres that operate on both formal and informal levels. Both Scien and Klor are well respected graffiti artists so 123 Klan and STN16 gallery have a strong connection to the subculture. The STN16 gallery is more formally run, however, in that they rent out work spaces for artists and special projects, exhibit graffiti and street art related work but also fine art and contemporary works. Scien and Klor also work closely with LNDMRK lending their business experience to the organisers, promoting artists, and hosting events during Mural Festival. En Masse works with artists from traditional or street art but also graffiti that they bring together to work on a variety of events, activations, and mural projects. Some of these are formal events such as the Musee des Beaux Arts Installation or The Love Letters to Great Lakes festival in Toronto in 2016,[176] while others are permission jams or arts workshops for local youth. A'Shop also employs a number of local graffiti artists, some permanently and others contractually. Most work as mural painters but they also lend and rent out studio or workshop space for any graffiti or street artists who need it.

Formal urban arts managers work mostly to extend their networks to benefit others in the community for work and career development while informal urban arts managers mostly work to preserve community ties, values, and memory. Informal urban arts managers usually have little management training but are deeply embedded in the subculture or community and so are able to organize unofficial jams and events where members can collaborate on productions and murals or commemorate important dates and community figures. The legitimacy of formal urban arts events like Mural Festival can also be extended to shore up the acceptability of subcultural and informal projects. For example, during Mural Festival, Art Gang organizes alleyway or commemorative jams behind their Fake Store location on St. Laurent Boulevard.[177] *(fig.3.8)* Senk has also promoted local and upcoming artists connected to the urban arts community like Ms Teri, Fonki, Five8, and many more who have had their work exhibited at the store or gallery space. Established members of these cadres also coach and mentor new or younger artists which helps to reproduce these attitudes and project skills over time.

An artist's membership or affiliation to informal or formal urban artistic cadres has a strong determining effect on their adoption of purist or muralist mentalities, with purists more often coming from informal cadres and muralists from formal ones. Artists who are more muralist in orientation, tend to have an instrumental attitude

towards their art and see the events as an opportunity to grow themselves professionally. Their participation in art festivals is an opportunity to get known, promote their work, make connections and expand their networks. They accomplish this either at the wall if they had time or after hours at social events, bars, and parties where they can mix with other artists, organisers, patrons, appreciators, art

Figure 3.8: Scan commemorative production, AG Crew. Mural Festival, Montreal. 2019. Photo by Kris Murray.

collectors, and other arts world professionals. Ultimately, the goal is to make the best and biggest of connections, to get seen and to be known, and to work one's way up into the elite circles of the art world. It is a very speculative attitude that fits lock and key into the type of outlook that engenders much of modern liberal capitalism. But instead of investing hard money or capital these artists are investing their time and energy into producing social capital through their art to connect with agents within economies of muralism. I met both graffiti and street artists who were serious in these matters who viewed painting at a high ticket event as a stepping stone to furthering their career prospects (more walls, more contracts, and more festivals). This was especially the case if they were able to get a big and visible wall –the bigger the better –or if they were offered to be a headlining artist for the event.

I also met a good number of graffiti and street artists who were not interested in cadres or who took their art work less seriously. For some it was because they refuse to play the game and 'sell out to big corpos' or 'the system' choosing instead to put their time and energy into jamming with other fellow artists on smaller walls or those in side alleys. This attitude tends to be more prevalent among the purists of these communities. For some graffiti and street artists who are younger and less established, making network connections for

work is less as important as making them with other likeminded writers and artists that they can practice and jam with. Maybe they do not know how to engage the seemingly more formal atmospheres (professional or serious) and settings which characterize the tone of afterhours socializing and art show scenes surrounding these events. For some it is intimidating and unless they take a chance and dive in or have a friend who is more outgoing and connected, encourages them to go, or introduces them into the crowd, then they probably will not attend these events and therefore miss these opportunities. Ultimately, this only compounds the resentment that some purists have with muralists and reinforces their distaste and antagonism for formal arts cadres.

Some formal urban arts cadres, like A'Shop, 123Klan, and En Masse have also grown to the level where they have the resources and knowledge to provide consulting advice to commercial and government agencies to organize mural arts projects or to do their own. In short, they have grown to a point where they can choose which contracts they want to pursue and which ones they want to pass on, giving them greater control over the production and representation of their art. Furthermore, they provide inspiration, knowledge, guidance, network connections, as well as the spatial and the material resources for other artists and activists to pursue their own projects, be they social or commercial in form. As leading artists they encourage others to aspire to greater things, to work together rather than against each other, which helps to keep the community together. These are the Great Men and Women of graffiti and street art who work to extend their own resources and network connections to others in their communities as well as work out tensions and problems which arise from time to time between crews and organizations.

Urban arts managers tend to be fluid in their management styles and most do not adhere to a fully hierarchical management structure. Some opt for a more horizontal or flat organizational structure with little middle management between project organizers and artists while others mix organizational forms to meet the needs to each project. As discussed in the second chapter, the social organization of graffiti and street artists has traditionally been counter hegemonic, and it is only expected that this non-conformist attitude, even if tempered, would still inform their management styles. At the same time, non-conformist attitudes can be problematic for urban economic development projects in that passive resistance and reluctance to engage undermines projects from within and can undercut profits. In extreme cases, artists and organisers may defect by going into less profit oriented professions or partially withdrawing from the labor market.

Boltanksi and Chiapello (2005) have argued that the general decline in orthodox forms of hierarchy and relations is symptomatic of the deliberate replacement of these types of command structures by the ruling classes in an effort to reduce antagonistic elements and create new profit vectors. In the case of urban arts cadres, the aim has been to persuade or convince people to voluntarily pursue legal and professional opportunities rather than unlawful or informal ones, thereby reducing the need and cost for any explicit control mechanisms. The 'legitimating apparatus' therefore must be perfected in order to ensure that the present generation of cadres stay in place and are able to train the next generation. This continuance of urban arts cadres is accomplished largely through management discourse, encoded in entrepreneurial forms of governance but also found in the rhetoric of prevention programs, mural programs, and urban branding projects. Management discourse also creates the necessary discursive framework needed for the direction and disciplining of new surplus artistic labor in the development of urban arts districts and creative industries. The reproduction of these cadres is also accomplished though financial persuasions which place constraints and sanctions on those who do not conform to regulations and expected attitudes. For example, artists who are cooperative and participate are rewarded with monetary compensation (employment) and opportunities to partake in future iterations of events. Those who refuse or who actively hold antagonistic attitudes face sanctions typically in the form of exclusion from arts events or any opportunities for work. Strategies of persuasion are especially applied when there is a strong numerical growth of a particular cohort, in this case graffiti and street artists, which will likely bring new and younger cadre members into the system. Additionally, directed management discourse and financial persuasions must be based in legitimate and localized criteria making them recognizable and familiar as well as right and morally acceptable to others in the urban arts community if they aim to be successful. In the case of street art muralism, the right or legitimate actions to be performed are those legal and public ones which produce professional opportunities and profits. For instance, those in formal arts cadres who speak about the 'right way to do muralism', or doing 'legal graffiti' (also discourse that comes from prevention programs) as opposed to the rewards from informal contracts or doing illicit productions or murals. The public and legitimate work of formal urban arts cadres has to be shown to be worthwhile and better rewarded when compared to alternatives and that it can also lead to self-realization through creative freedom. They must also respond to criticism to explain themselves to others and those in subculture as formal cadres can become the targets of criticism because of their privileged positions. For instance, graffiti

writers and artists, even their subordinates, calling them ‘sell outs’ and ‘corpo’ muralists as well those who bomb and cross out legal works in retaliation *(fig. 3.9-3.10).*

In Montreal, management discourse has been directed towards key players in the graffiti, street art, and mural painting communities over the last decade in order to propagate a professional and profit oriented mindset. In turn, it also helps to further recruit other artists and stakeholders who work with or under them. Even non-profit organizations like MU are considered here as they work closely with the municipality and employ some street artists for their cultural and community projects. They may not be a for-profit enterprise but MU’s organizational and management structure still contributes to promoting and perpetuating entrepreneurial forms of governance and urban branding strategies. As well, management discourse and entrepreneurial forms of governance are more effective when urban arts managers have formal educations in commerce or management.

Figure 3.9: Fief mural crossed. Montreal. 2017. Photo by Kris Murray.

Both Jason and Senk have formal educations in commerce and law which has helped them to both establish their own independent businesses as well as develop the mind and skill sets necessary to navigate the social and professional relationships associated with formal cadres. Senk’s legal training has also allowed him to provide counsel for writers artists who have run ins with the law (being caught doing graffiti, fines, possible jail time or community service). Even with his formal education as a lawyer, Senk has chosen to pursue more of an informal pathway building an entrepreneurial framework revolving around local artists and merchandise designers

connected to subculture. Conversely, Jason has more often pursued formal street art contracts and relations, working with institutional, corporate, and municipal partners in the production of murals, activations, installations, and events. Elizabeth Ann-Doyle of MU has worked closely with major organizations such as Cirque de Soliel and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts before she co-founded MU in 2007. Andre from LNDMRK also has a formal (Collegial) education in commerce and was working for Cirque de Soliel prior to co-founding Mural Festival which helped to train him in formal management frameworks, as well as positioning him well to work with commercial and government patrons.

Figure 3.10: Mural cross out, Zonek. St. Henri, Montreal. 2017. Photo by Kris Murray

Fluke started A'Shop with only his informal experience as a graffiti muralist that he gained through the subculture and his time painting with members of K6A Crew, sometimes acting as artistic director, for events or contracts. Fluke had nothing more than a high school education and gained almost all of his knowledge and expertise as a muralist and artist from his time on the streets among fellow graffiti writers. As previously mentioned Fluke had been mentored under more established writers in the subculture at a young age. He also gained a more formal experience working with Café Graffiti, a youth and community drop in centre in the borough of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, in the early 2000s where he served as the second artistic director. His position at Café Graffiti put him in working relationships with several other writers –Zeck, Arpi, Monk-e, Otak, Strike, Axe, Heresy, and Rodz One –and gave him the opportunity to work on a number of private and public mural projects, workshops, and installations.[178] The initial success of the shop then benefitted from their experiences working with Café Graffiti and the range of municipal and commercial clients as much as from the drive and experience that he and his team of established graffiti artists (Zek and Axe especially) brought to the company. From 2013-15 Fluke was also invited to L'École d'Entrepreneurship de Beauce (EEB) to take their Programme Élite-EEB, meant for fledgling entrepreneurs to help them expand or reorganize their

businesses, innovate, and improve profits. It was this opportunity to attend EEB that I believe had a determining effect on Fluke's interests to expand the scope and scale of work that A'Shop was willing to take on and the entrepreneurial mindset of the company more generally. It also led to the growth of tensions between Fluke and Axe as he began to drift away from the more purist persuasions in the subculture.

In January 2016 I met up with Fluke at the A'Shop creative space where we got to talk about some of their recent work and upcoming projects that they were putting together. At this point he was about done his first year at EEB and it was clear that his time in the program had strongly influenced and amplified his attitudes towards innovation and the professional development of his team and enterprise. When we finally got to sit down he said, "I invented a new type of paint." "A new type of paint?" I said, not fully comprehending. "I'll tell you more about it later," he said and then went on to explain to me about how they had been working on building up their relationship with a big corporate partner, Lennox International Incorporated, a leading air filtration and heating company in North America. It all began about a year ago when they got a call from Lennox to do some work for them in a commercial ad campaign. Apparently the Texas based Lennox marketing team were quite uninformed about graffiti and street art and had Googled the top fifteen artists in North America. A'Shop was on that list along with some other big names like Tristan Eaton, Sheppard Fairey, How, and Nosm and the Lennox team must have liked what they saw because they reached out to Fluke for the project. I commented that they had been getting a lot of media coverage and attention over the last few years so that probably raised their online profile a bit. Even with the recent boost in popularity, he said, "we were at the bottom of the list, because we have less history. Somehow," he said with a smile, "we still managed to get the job." He thinks they were chosen because of their versatility, that is, their adaptability and willingness to be flexible in terms of what Lennox needed for that particular job. It was a typical corporate contract that did not involve much creative input from either Fluke or his artistic team, but that was a compromise he was willing to make as it paid well and it got them connected to a big client. "I mean we made some nice money" he said, "but we weren't doing our work, we were just asked to reproduce this dragon and this robot that was designed by them and it was good. But I built up a relationship with the art directors...and a year later here we are able to pitch our own concepts."

Although it took the better part of a year to acclimate the Lennox marketing team to their idea and then develop and present their project, he said that "The artistic directors are starting to understand the power of street art and the interest that the regular public has in it and how powerful that is as a marketing tool." The project is an art exposition, *Degrees of Perfect,*[179] to be held at the Los Angeles Container Yards in April 2016 bringing art and engineering together in a unique and spectacular presentation. Fluke helped to select the group of five graffiti artists from Los Angeles, Montreal, and Toronto who were to headline the event: Slick, Dodo, Scien, Zek, and Bacon. These five graffiti artists would produce one of-a-kind canvasses mounted on specially designed closed-circuit HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) systems *(fig. 3.12)*. The paint that Fluke invented is thermochromatic, meaning that it changes color depending on the surrounding temperature. The

Figure 3.11: Fluke working on thermocromatic paint at A'Shop. 2015. Photo by A'Shop.

HVAC systems allow for the precise heating or cooling of the canvasses prompting a transformation of the content with the changing colors of the paints *(fig. 3.13)*.

Lennox sent engineers to Montreal to work with A'Shop at their creative studios to design and build the HVAC systems while the artists busily painted their canvasses, testing them out on the newly designed systems. It was a tight time-table, only a couple of months of preparation as they would be headed out to Los Angeles by mid-April to start setting the exposition up. In an interview for Lennox Fluke said that

> The learning curve had to be very quick. The challenge was not only creating artwork and making stuff interesting, but learning how to use it at the same time...So the beautiful part about this is that the artist's pieces are not polished. You can feel the trial and error on the structures, you can feel the engineering, and

you can feel the artist discovering the paint. They're not printed; there's a human aspect to this that is very present.[180]

Fluke sees the Lennox art exposition and contract as a major opportunity for A'Shop to reach an even wider audience. After more than five years grinding through municipal, commercial and smaller corporate jobs, he sees this contract as the chance to advance his enterprise to the next level. In order to achieve this he needed to 'educate the client' as to the potential value of graffiti and street art to furthering the Lennox brand. "This is where my job is to educate," he said, and then reiterated his conversation with the Lennox marketing agent:

So listen, what is it that you ultimately want? To have people buy AC and heating units…You already have an extremely strong presence in terms of potential buyers. You have trade shows, you're in stores, you have traditional paper, newspaper, TV advertisement, and those advertisements are directed to a specific audience.

Television and paper ads, however, are no longer as effective "because we're not in a traditional era anymore." Switching back he said, "So what I was impressing [on] them was what you want is a friendly and safe approach through a viral video or something that is trending because…now it's not all about ratings, it's about trends."

Figure 3.12: HVAC graffiti mural in progress, A'Shop. Montreal. 2016. Photo by A'Shop.

Fluke and his team approached Lennox with the art exposition concept, which would bring their rather disparate arts and engineering fields and industries together, and provide some exciting and innovating material to produce a set of viral videos to promote each of their respective businesses. The idea was ultimately to cross pollinate their brands and in doing so widen their respective demographics to include areas that neither of them were be able to necessarily reach individually. A'Shop offered Lennox access to a particular street aesthetic and urban cool associated with graffiti and street art lifestyle and culture to update their brand, while Lennox, added legitimacy to A'Shop's reputation, and a unique and innovative platform to promote the business.

The similarities between the branding strategies of graffiti writers and artists and those of marketing and advertising companies are not lost on Fluke. He sees the base logic of graffiti, *getting up*, as a primitive form of advertising, and street credibility as an earlier form of social influence that corporations have begun to tap into to reach youth and alternative demographics. “These corporations want the same thing except they are *paying their way to do it* and we *painted our way to it*.” Corporations see the popularity of graffiti and street art as a vehicle to showcase their products and enhance consumer appeal. At the same time, he has realized the limitations of public funding for his more ambitious graffiti and mural art projects, so he has had to also seek funding from the private sector in order to meet the budgetary demands which accompany larger initiatives. “There is no human on this planet that I know of, that is essentially accessible to me that can turn around and give me half a million dollars to produce one of my ideas. So you’re only other alternative is corporations.”

He sees both corporations and artists as having realized the potential for graffiti and street art to be adapted to a range of

Figure 3.13: HVAC mural system. A'Shop, Montreal. 2016. Photo by A'Shop.

commercial applications, just like hip hop was twenty or more years ago. “I think that’s what’s happened to hip hop –is (still) happening to graffiti and street art.” Fluke points out that it is still an ongoing process, with new possibilities and opportunities emerging on a daily basis, the Lennox contract being one such possibility. At the same time this process has divided those who want to produce art for art’s sake and those who are intent on making their art a profitable venture. “New Hip Hop heads don’t even know what the old Hip Hop heads are talking about because it’s a generational gap,” he says. “That’s exactly what’s happening with graffiti.”

The internet and social media have opened up new pathways for success in the graffiti and street art worlds that Fluke wants to tap into. “We went from trying to get up in the city, then we went to try to get up in the [local] community…and then now we’re at a different level where we want to be relevant [to the] international community.” He sees other artists who are popular on social media as not being necessarily better or more innovative than A’Shop, just that they are trending more strongly and therefore seem more relevant, which brings them more attention and opportunities. “It’s

Figure 3.14: Thermocromatic Graffiti mural by Dodo Ose showing the transition from one state to another. Los Angeles, USA. 2016.

virtual,” he says “likes are actually a currency.” Artists who collaborate with each other and post their projects online through social media are essentially using each other’s platforms to promote each other’s brand of art to their followers. By painting with an artist who has a much larger following that you have, you could receive a massive boost to your following and your online presence will grow, making your work more relevant. This is not a foreign concept to graffiti as writers will regularly team up to paint productions in much the same manner. As Fluke explained, “To go out bombing with Sake in Montreal [would] upgrade…his reputation, his status…

since Sake is a popular dude." He mentioned that they have Bacon, a well-respected King in Toronto but that he "is one of the most under rated Canadian geniuses…no one knows who he is on the international [scene]. Canadians know who he is. A lot of Americans know who he is, but in our community. In the corporate world, Bacon has no followers on Instagram." With this project Fluke hopes to help elevate Bacon on the international scene, bringing him more followers and attention through social media. Still, he sees himself and A'Shop as underdogs in all of this, "we're big dogs in our community but we're underdogs in the international community." His hopes are that they can generate a million views with a viral video covering the production and showcasing of the thermochromatic artworks. "So it's a team effort. So corporations having corporate goals, aligned with artists [with artistic] goals… being known, being seen, and being spoken about."

For Fluke, the pathway to furthering the success of his enterprise hinges on his being able to improve the presence of A'Shop online and boost their influence on social media towards a following of 50 thousand or more. He sees this opportunity with Lennox as a possible way to reach that goal. "Typically these companies will look for is a minimum of like 50 thousand followers, to invest into a person," he says. "It's essentially a new form of sponsorship directly tied to one's social media influence." The types of big-ticket clients that he is trying to acquire are the corporate kind who have budgets into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. These corporations do not have any deep knowledge or greater appreciation for graffiti or street art, and are instead more interested in how an artist can bring them more exposure and connect them to wider consumer demographics. He says that the clients he is seeking "don't go to local art shows, these people go online to see who's the most popular street artists in North America, who are the top ten graffiti artists...who has the most Instagram followers that we can co-sign so we can get some of their audience to know our brand." Previously, he explained that A'Shop had lost contracts "not because of the quality of our work but simply because we don't have enough followers." Lennox, however, looked at their portfolio online first and were impressed enough to give them an opportunity with a smaller commercial contract to show what they were capable of. He says that "they could have easily turned around and been like 'Nope. You're not relevant enough.' But what they were looking for was a genius idea…of how to present their product that no other artist has. So that gave me my opportunity."

Ultimately, Fluke says that to be successful today in the graffiti and street art mural industry, you need three main ingredients. First you need what he calls *quality*, "you need to have good product, good skill, and ambition." Second, he says that you need to need to have a substantial online presence and a significant following on social

media, that is, "you *need* to be relevant on an *international* scale." Local success is certainly to be appreciated and can provide a source of income, but it affords only limited opportunities. Third, you need to have the resources to make things happen and a creative-collaborative attitude, in short, the "capability of producing and [being] someone who people want to work with." His ambition for success and the growth of his company has been largely influenced by entrepreneurial forms of governance and the push for urban branding strategies in Montreal and other cities in North America that incorporate graffiti and street art muralism. The offer for him to attend the Elite Entrepreneurs program at EEB was likely an effort by corporate and municipal agencies to amplify Fluke's existent interests to grow A'Shop as a mural painting and arts activation company. Although he has clearly adopted a more entrepreneurial mindset and mostly distanced himself from his purist graffiti roots and dependency on the subculture for validation, he has not forgotten those roots or how his time in the subculture helped him to become the artist and innovator he sees himself as today. Even if it is a challenge most times, Fluke has done well to not only provide work and opportunities for his team but for other talented graffiti and street artists in the urban arts communities. In this way, Fluke is taking on the attitude of what Boltanksi and Chiapello (2005) have designated the "Network Extender," the great person of the Projective City who's "qualities are placed in the service of the common good" (356). In this case that common good is the wellbeing and success of his artistic production team and company, and by extension of this, the local subculture more generally.

Creative Differences

Montreal and Miami are representative of the direction many cities in North America are taking in trying to develop arts and cultural infrastructure in-line with creative city discourses and urban branding strategies. In particular, these cities are developing urban arts districts where various permutations of graffiti and street art are being deployed to aesthetically regenerate and commercially magnetize urban cores, inner city neighborhoods, and stagnant industrial districts. Montreal and Miami are also important because of the networks between graffiti and street artists and special interest groups who have, by virtue of these connections, helped to establish a creative industrial infrastructure. Mural Festival has certainly carved out its own niche in urban arts events, but it has benefitted greatly from the long standing history and successes of graffiti arts events which preceded it.

Part of the appeal of Mural Festival has been its reception across Canada and in the United States. Other cities such as Miami, Ottawa, Edmonton, and Halifax for instance, look to Montreal as an example

of best practice in urban arts event organization and implementation. As discussed in chapter two, Under Pressure, Meeting of Styles, and other related graffiti art events have already been recognized as setting the example of best practice in event organization and implementation *on an informal level* which have been successfully reproduced in these same cities for years. For Montreal, Miami, and many other cities in North America which aim to produce *formally managed and curated arts events* then, street art muralism offers a way to make credible the celebration of this creativity in the city. Street art festivals are the spatial referent to contemporary urban branding strategies which benefit from their recurring on an annual basis, expanding, and attracting ever more impressive lineups of artists and performers. Arts districts like Wynwood and those being developed in Montreal are spaces which "assume an important symbolic role in the celebration of the idea of a lively city, basically by presenting stereotyped image[s] of an urban playscape [and] where to consume nighttime entertainment"[181] *(fig. 3.15-3.16)* Indeed, many municipal governments are embracing this push towards interurban competition by redesigning city space for consumption and creativity in their efforts to market themselves as destination cities for work and play.[182] Such efforts in the early 2000s worked to produce an image of Montreal as an 'urban designscape' which drew heavily from the symbolic and social

Figure 3.15: Wynwood Walls Opening Exhibit. Miami. 2016. Photo by Kris Murray.

capital of the fashion and design industry.[183] It appears that more recent efforts have been to produce a similarly structured *streetartscape* in Montreal and other North American cities where a culture of arts or a *street arts habitus* –the multilevel use of street art muralism for beautification, commercial, tourist, and public activations, advertising, historical and cultural celebration –creates linkages between artists, consumers, local businesses and property owners in the city. This makes them dependent on each other for their shared survival and binds them to creative cities discourses as agents of urban branding strategies.

This also represents a major shift from symbolic to use value of mural arts in North America away from publicly funded arts projects and the types of social and political action which revolved around the production of murals in the past. The mural arts used to be the

referent and visual expression of political protest and historical critique but now have seemingly become the referent to urban branding and economic development strategies. The aim of Mural Festival from the standpoint of the SDBSL and the city is make Montreal a 'street art destination.' Reinforcing this destination image and growing creative industries around it enhances the competitive edge of Montreal to attract investors and creatives not just to participate in events or showcase art works in local galleries, but to come and make Montreal their home base.

Figure 3.16: VIP area, Mural Festival. Montreal. 2017. Photo by Kris Murray.

Transforming the downtown core and its surrounding neighborhoods into an open air art museum and trendy creative arts districts comes with potential problems and contradictions as well. As the festival grows and expands, neighborhood spaces become increasingly more commodified, controlled, managed, and curated, and through this transformation common spaces become less public and more privately oriented.[184] As it has been seen in Miami this process inevitably leads towards gentrification and redevelopment of these district and festival areas. Rising rental fees and costs of living, however, eventually displace residential and commercial renters, including the artists whose work helped to breathe life back into the

area in the first place. The recent concerns regarding the rising costs of commercial rents in the Plateau area of Montreal is evidence that current branding strategies are having this effect. Long stretches of storefronts along St. Denis and St. Laurent, as well as along St. Catherine's Street have stood vacant for months as many proprietors cannot afford to continue paying the high rental costs property owners are demanding. The uplifting of street art over graffiti muralism also reduces the available public funds for local graffiti subvention and prevention departments, displaces and dispossesses the graffiti subculture of city space historically claimed by writers and artists, and creates tensions between the graffiti and street art communities. The most common manifestation of these tensions is the vandalising of street art murals from urban arts events like Mural Festival by graffiti bombers intent on reclaiming wall spaces from undeserving street artists. Although Andre and the organisers of Mural Festival were intent on being more responsive to local needs and culture to produce a more sustainable event than what they observed in Wynwood, it seems that the socio-economic effects have been similarly reproduced rather than reduced. Although graffiti artists have been included in the event since its inception, the displacement and dispossession of graffiti culture continues. New condominium developments have begun to creep towards the festival location taking over old parking lots and renovating some of the empty storefronts *(fig. 3.17)*.

Figure 3.17: A new condominium complex under construction over an old parking lot next to Mural Festival VIP area. 2017. Photo by Kris Murray.

In looking at how LNDMRK secured the financial resources needed to produce the first and then subsequent iterations of Mural Festival, it can be seen how this had a determining effect on the tone of the event as well as relations between graffiti and street artists.

Andre says that they set up a meeting with the local business development association, the SDBSL, to see if they could get the support and funding to help produce a Montreal Mural Festival in 2013. He said that the director of the SDBSL had hired Fluke two years prior to paint a mural and had "realized the impact of art integration, of doing art in front of people but also the effect of a lasting piece of art on a wall, on his business, on the neighborhood. People were stopping by, taking photos, talking about it." The director was unhappy with the current look and aesthetic of the outdoor street sale along St. Laurent Blvd. There were also some permit issues as some shop owners apparently were not allowed to set up kiosks outside of their establishments without proper permissions from the municipality. He says that the director characterised it as "some kind of weird outdoor flea market" which needed to be cleaned up.

Figure 3.18: Food kiosks, Mural Festival, Montreal. 2016. Photo by Kris Murray.

He went into his meeting with the director of the SDBSL with the hopes of securing the parking lot just off of Prince Arthur Street to hold their inaugural Mural Fest event. He was surprised when he was offered the whole street. "We went from one parking lot to like 1.5 miles. So we were like, 'we can't do it man, it's going to cost way too much.' So he said, "How about I kick-start the first edition?" He took the gamble of writing us a cheque to cover 95% of the first edition. They were provided a subvention of around 250 thousand dollars by the SDBSL that year and were unsure as to how to spend it all. "Are we using this money to create five editions or are we just going all in and just creating one edition that has the potential of creating so much noise that people will ask for a second and third?"

He admits that they were naïve to the costs of producing such a large event and that kick starts such as this were not going to keep happening. “We were thinking that if it works, the second edition sponsors are going to knock at the door and the city is going to throw

Figure 3.19: Mural Festival main "Rogers' wall. 2013. Photo by Kris Murray.

money at us…the naive part of us thinking that money would fall from the trees.” They realized quickly that the costs of running such a large event added up: equipment rentals, materials, security, parking, space rentals, amenities, artist commissions, and a slew of other smaller expenses. “Everybody wants money man, that’s what you realize, *everybody* wants money…it adds up real quick…and our salaries [were] not part of that, you know. Again, beginner’s mistake, you don’t count your salary in because you’re like “Ah its ok, I’ll do it for free” (laughs).

Even with the generous subvention by the city they still had sponsors offering to support the event. One of those was Rogers Communications, one of the largest media outlets, telephone and internet providers in Quebec and North America. Although the subvention covered most of what they needed, having Rogers as a major sponsor also brought the promise of greater exposure for the festival. Receiving major sponsorship from such a large corporation, however, was a bit of a slippery slope in terms of creative control, that Andre said, left them a bit apprehensive at first:

> We didn’t know how to react, because as much as we wanted sponsors we are also afraid of sponsorship, because [it] often means you have to work with another partner. You need to tweak whatever you’re doing to make it fit because they have the money…We’d rather not do a festival than a festival that looks like a bunch of

billboards, it was important for us that any involvement of sponsor in Mural wouldn't look like it. The first year I think was the more obvious one.

Although Andre voiced concern regarding making any compromise for corporate sponsorship, the largest and most visible of walls for Mural Festival has been dedicated first to Rogers and then to Fido themed murals every year.

Rogers and Fido both stipulated that murals produced on that wall had to conform to their corporate color palette (Rogers red, Fido yellow and green) and include content which identified with their brands and products (phones, tennis players, animals and characters). For the most part, artists have agreed to adjust their designs and accommodate the color palette *(figs. 3.19-3.20)*. The first year, the main wall featured close to a dozen local graffiti and street artists who collaborated to paint a huge production accompanied by a larger than life tennis player. Being a dynamic wall with many moving parts meant that there would inevitably be some snags along the way. One of the participating artists, Vilx, had painted several characters along the bottom of the mural, including an elderly homeless man drinking from a bottle of alcohol. Word came back that the image was considered to be offensive to the sponsor, who wanted to have

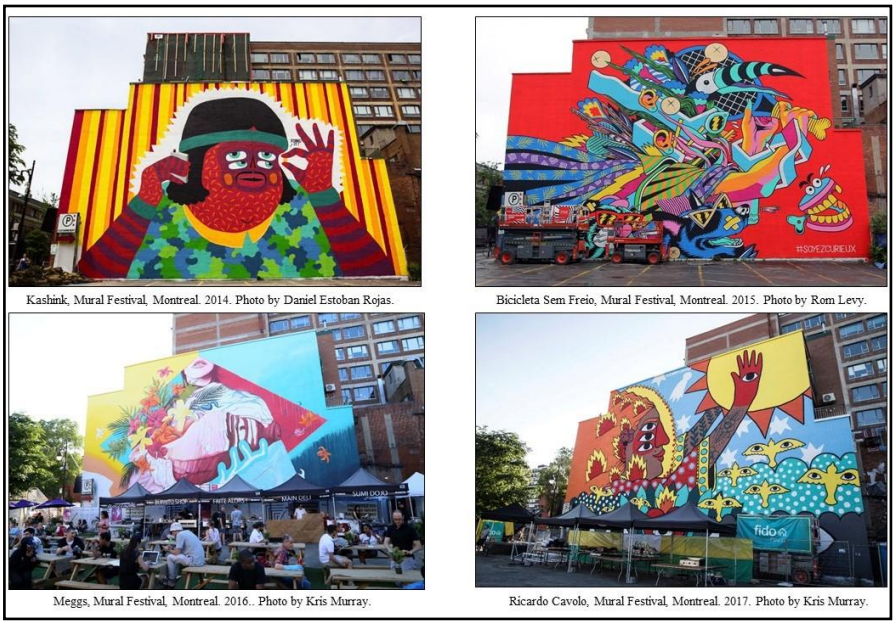

Figure 3.20: Mural Festival main wall 2014-2017. Photos by Kris Murray, Rom Levy, and Daniel Estoban Rojas.

no controversial imagery. Vilx pushed back claiming it was an honest representation of life on the Main, that it was commonly known that there were homeless and rough sleepers who drank and did drugs on the streets. The festival organisers explained that he had to remove or modify the image or it would be replaced to which he still refused. Andre says that it was the sponsor who was concerned

that upper management would disapprove and that if it was his decision that he would have left it as is, but because the sponsor was involved, he had to modify his own attitude to the situation. In the end he enforced the sponsor's wishes at the possible threat of damaging relations or losing the sponsorship for future events. He said that "it created a bit of a beef with one of the artists that got painted over by Nixon because [he] did not want to modify his part. So we just said 'We're still paying you but we are also going to pay someone else to go over you and create something else.'

Jason Botkin had a different perspective that sided more with artistic and creative freedoms. He said that it was his idea to "right off the bat bring in some graffiti artists" for the first Rogers wall in 2013. As he had been a part of those initial conversation and meetings to organise the festival in 2013 with the LNDMRK crew he had taken on the organization of the main wall for the event. He had never worked on a huge wall like that in Montreal with such a mix of graffiti and street artists –Nixon, Before, Five8, Scan, Dan Fuller, himself, Vilx, Nixon. The inclusion of these graffiti artists on the Rogers wall that inaugural year was done "in a very calculated way," Jason said, meant to appease the local hard graffiti cultural elements, but also to truly be an opportunity for some great artists on both sides to come together and do a monumental collaborative mural project. "It was the perfect opportunity to give a bunch of dudes who are really proficient with spray paint to do something big, to get paid pretty well. I was able to pay each guy like a fair bit of money, like two thousand bucks for a day or two worth of work. And then we got this amazing thing." He says that he gave all the artists creative freedom to do whatever they wanted. They put together a sketch of the intended mural before they commenced painting, and he felt that it looked like a classic production.

> The guys did an amazing job, I loved what they did. Vilx came in and did the masterpiece of the whole thing…(the) piece at the bottom, was incredible…He painted this amazing homeless dude with a bottle…then the client came by and was like 'too much, you have to get rid of it'...I was like, are you fucking kidding me?

He was at the airport heading out of the city for another project so was unable to deal with the problem during the festival. When Jason got back to Montreal he spoke with Nixon and found out about everything that went on. He felt terrible about it all. Nixon ended up going over Vilx and painting more tennis players. Although he was upset after talking to Nixon, he understood why Nixon had to go over him. Still, in Jason's opinion the organisers had screwed up, and he felt that he had to go to bat for the artists, to stand up for them and the integrity of their work if no one else would. He set up a meeting the next day with the Mural festival organisers and the representative

for Rogers and slammed them for going over Vilx's piece and curtailing creative freedoms. Rogers had asked for a tennis theme and they had delivered a forty foot tennis player but some small character in the very bottom of the massive mural was a problem? He understood that they had taken a chance on sponsoring a graffiti and street art mural festival in Montreal but he felt that they were still missing the point, "You took a huge risk in doing this. You've never done this before as a corporation, well done. It's a big deal, a big risk…but I don't think you see what you got. What you've got is way more than you ever expected and you're killing it, you're strangling it." Although Jason still holds great esteem for the festival organisers and they are still friends, he decided to leave the organising committee after that year and would only be involved in his own projects in association with the event moving forward.

In 2017 LNDMRK took on Vice as a sponsor which allowed them to save on admission fees for the main music events, and "to just to have an open space where people could just come and appreciate the music performance while they were watching art being created in front of them." Andre says that Vice already has a pre-existent partnership with Fido, who is also a sponsor for the event: "They were able to offer something that was…unachievable for us without that type of budget. Just the plane tickets for a few of those headliners was more than our yearly salaries." Andre explained that they had been trying to make a connection with Fido to be a sponsor for the festival for a few years. "But it's not easy," he said, "You need to be a good subject otherwise they won't come to you." By 'good subject', Andre is referring to their attitude of continuing to please their sponsors and providing content which is not controversial or shocking. Fido hired Vice to create content from Mural Festival to further their brand development and to connect with a younger demographic. At the same time, because Mural Festival has become a source of content creation for Fido and Rogers, the content that Vice produces, he says, in turn "elevate(s) the asset that has become Mural for Fido." In referring to Mural Festival as an *asset* to their corporate sponsor Fido, Andre clearly reveals the influence of corporate culture in emphasizing instrumental relations and the commoditization of mural arts. Certainly he sees the festival as an important platform for urban arts in the city, but he also sees the value of the festival in terms of providing a revenue stream and growing the LNDMRK brand. As Andre sees it, Mural Festival was able to reach a much wider audience because Fido and Vice were involved which created the potential for more opportunities and connections to other markets and sponsors. In his opinions, this is as a win for the festival:

> At the end of the day it also allows us to find another voice, and I think that is probably one of the most relevant media for Mural other than the smaller human

driven media, all the others that is run by enthusiasts. Plus its credibility, you know. When I say to someone that we are partners with Vice, they know what it is and they know what it means. So it allows us to open some doors you know?

Indeed, having the largest telecommunications company in the country as a major sponsor for your event greatly improves your exposure and credibility, at least publicly. It also creates a client-based relationship which can force event organizers to have to make compromises in favor of their sponsors over that of the artists or community. Since Rogers and Fido are paying for the space to advertise their brand over and along with the event there is an expectation that their needs will be met or responded to their satisfaction. Their sponsorship and support comes with the expectation that the mural arts produced will not be shocking or controversial and will be supportive of or complimentary to their products and brands. The need to secure funding for urban arts events therefore can create a dependency on private or corporate sponsorship which inevitably weakens the capacity for these events to remain independent and diminishes the possibilities for critical artistic engagement.

The emphasis on economic outcomes in urban branding and redevelopment strategies shift the focus from the *quality of life* to the *quality of place*, where central downtown urban environments are designed to be more visually appealing, vibrant, and interesting.[185] As such, policies are geared towards superficial changes such as "signage, banners, street lighting and facades, as well as promotional strategies such as the development of a logo or the marketing of the city skyline."[186] The incorporation and development of urban arts districts such as the Wynwood Arts District in Miami and that which is forming in the Plateau Mont-Royal area in Montreal can be understood as following the direction of these policies. The more monumental the street art muralism, the greater the creative potential and vision that a city projects itself as having. According to this logic, monumental street art murals reveal the creative quality of place of a city and by virtue of their monumentality they brand the city skyline and anchor it in creativity itself. Street art murals are in effect gigantic signage, banners, and facades which promote imagination and artistic creation in the city. They signify that creativity and art are at the heart of the city. Like the signage and lights which demarcate the downtown shopping or red light districts, an abundance of street art muralism signifies an inherent creative energy or ethos of a city. The use of graffiti and street art muralism to produce this supposed distinctive image of the city that is culturally legible and recognizable to mass audiences has also contributed to the standardization of culture more generally.

Harvey (1989) also points out that "urban entrepreneurialism implies…some level of inter-urban competition" which becomes

increasingly and externally coercive the more potent it becomes. Inter-urban competition to produce bigger and more spectacular events can lead other cities to brand themselves as creative and street art destinations by replicating high profile events from other cities for similar successes. This can have the effect of forcing repetitive, formulaic, and serial reproductive patterns of development in other cities wanting to cash in on the attraction and economic stimulus associated with cultural events and urban arts festivals.[187] Cultural and commercial innovation and competitive advantages become increasingly more ephemeral as serial reproduction increases.[188] For example, the most successful districts, festivals, even murals between cities seems to change on a yearly basis. Sometimes even within cities themselves as with the production of two commemorative murals of Leonard Cohen in Montreal in 2017. Moreover, this can also have the effect of homogenizing the local diversity of artistic forms towards 'successful' outcomes associated with street art festivals. Intra-urban competition then starts to emulate similar patterns of serial reproduction in that organisers and sponsors who want to achieve similar successes as other urban arts festivals and events in other cities and so choose to support and provide space for street art muralism or street art aesthetics over say, graffiti oriented styles and events which may not attract public attention and interest. Additionally, municipalities and cities stand to either "improve or lose their economic vitality"[189] if they do not provide the conditions, space, and opportunities for urban arts events and festivals which cater to street art muralism.

Quinn argues that the "increasing professionalism and the growing stature of the festival both as commercial enterprise and as tourist attraction underpins a perception that festivals are becoming increasingly exclusive and inaccessible." (2005: 934) It seems, however, that it is not just for audiences but for artists as well. Inter-urban competition drives festival organisers to keep upping the calibre of artists in their annual line ups, inviting international celebrity artists as headliners and giving them the largest and most visible walls. Local artists are given walls to paint but they are typically not as large or visible. This can also lead to competition between festivals for high profile celebrity artists. For instance, Phlegm painted in Montreal in 2013, then Toronto in 2014; Pichavio painted in Edmonton in 2018 and then Montreal in 2019. This over reliance on a small and select group of artists, or of relying on a particular model for branding the city through urban arts festivals "poses the risk of image decay as the brand dilutes diversity."[190] This goes for artists as well, who end up competing with each other to acquire larger walls and headline bigger events which in turn promotes their efforts at self-branding. This serialization of urban arts festivals can lead to a sort of 'supermarket effect' where public

audiences are presented with 'bulk processed arts culture' from city to city where one could just as easily locate a Banksy as much as they could a Coca-Cola.[191] Harvey argues that this can have result of creating "a stimulating if often destructive maelstrom of urban-based cultural, political, production and consumption innovations" (1989: 12) creating more instability than consistently profitable results.

With urban arts festivals and districts, urban space is reordered through discourses which depict graffiti writing as problematic counter intuitive to the economic and cultural well-being of the city. Graffiti writers are considered to be "problematic subject identities –people in need of remedying because of their failure to behave like 'desirable' citizens', tourists or residents."[192] This attitude reinforces the notion that street art muralism is the only acceptable form of street-based arts that should be promoted at the public level. In this sense, urban arts and mural festivals can be seen as attempts to tame the uncontrolled and informal systems surrounding graffiti and street art, among other undesirable aesthetic aspects such as homelessness, vagrants, and nonconforming business or property owners. The

> creative city script attempts to introduce order and predictability into the urban landscape by ensuring that businesses (and the public at large) conform to codes of professional design. But an emphasis on a short-term, task-oriented policy can have the effect of reinforcing the marketization and privatization of public space and can displace grassroots and informal models of urban development.[193]

The desire to exclude graffiti from urban arts festivals in favor of street art muralism is made to appear commonsensical when viewed through the lens of the refashioned, safe, dynamic, and comfortable consumption space of the urban arts district.[194]

A New Creative Underclass?

As much as graffiti and street artists have been given an opportunity to pursue new legitimate pathways through the constellation of initiatives, programs, funding, and networks promoted by creative cities discourses and urban branding strategies, members of the subculture argue that graffiti continues to be displaced and dispossessed in favor of street art muralism. They see graffiti muralism as still having a place in the city but it is not afforded the same visibility or access to resources and projects which fall in line with municipally supported initiatives or programs. This is a point of contention which continues to produce discord among members of the arts community and the graffiti subculture. Graffiti purists, both young and old, express this disharmony by vandalising graffiti and street art murals of both local and visiting artists.

The deliberate uplifting of some cultural practices, productions, and objects over those which are symbolic or subcultural can also contribute to the formation of a 'creative underclass.'[195] However

uneven the distribution of resources is across cultural sectors and groups, the creative underclass represents an important polemical challenge and counterpoint to creative economy discourses. The creative underclass has emerged as a result of the shift towards creative cities policies and urban branding strategies and also refers to the unemployed and those who occupy the lowest segment of the urban artistic spectrum. The creative underclass

> is more broadly based and actively engaged in expressive resistance that usually forms part of larger political movements seeking to destabilize entrenched and unequal social relations, moralities, and economic power. It encompasses both those who situate themselves solidly in the bohemian artistic tradition in classical and emergent artistic forms, and those whose creativity emerges not from such a lofty calling but from everyday rebellious practices. (2012: 129)

The uplifting of one mode of artistic production or economic development over others increases the level of impoverishment and disempowerment for those who either refuse or cannot conform which contributes to the creation of a distinctive underclass. In American cities like Denver, San Francisco, New York, and Silicon Valley, where this form of "urban entrepreneurialism has been particularly vigorous, the result has been instability within the urban system"[196] and this is namely because of the speculative and ephemeral nature of these types of projects.

Harvey points to cities which invest into sports infrastructure such as stadiums and arenas or facilities needed for Olympic events as examples of "overmalling" (1989: 13). Similarly the over popularity of street art muralism could lead to an *overmuralling* of cities and of course there is the real risk of these events and festivals losing steam or buzz. Continually growing the scale and spectacularism of these events and festivals is important because "the selling of the city as a location for activity depends heavily upon the creation of an attractive urban imagery."[197] The sharp increase in the production of more murals in city centres, neighborhoods, and former industrial areas shows how street art muralism is being mobilized to this effect.

Graffiti artists voiced concern about the uplifting of street art and international artists over those from the local subculture, and how this choice is informed by urban branding strategies and development projects. Moreover, several commented that they felt like they were being given less attention than the invited international street artists at Mural Festival Montreal or similar events across the country.

> The whole hierarchy of artists in Mural Fest. You know were all on the same list but were not treated the same way at all...for sure it was glamorous. I don't need much to be satisfied painting. But definitely I can feel the hierarchy. I can feel that I was at the bottom of their list. (Ms Teri)

> The street art network has become a lot closer to marketing than to graffiti, internationally, in the western world…most of the festivals will treat the locals like shit and treat the international superstars like divas and gods. And that's everywhere…In Mexico...people give me testimony about how bad they are being treated because they are Mexican, and it's all over. Same thing in Montreal festivals and a lot of festivals across Canada. When you are from Montreal you are not treated the same way as internationals. You don't have the same salary, you don't sleep in the same conditions, you don't have the same visibility and publicity, you don't have interviews; you don't have anything. So yeah, I would say that globalisation has happened as well on the street art level. (Monk-e)

Their points made me think about my own relation to this issue, at least from a documenter's point of view. Organisers often invite documenters to their events to photograph and record the artists and the festivals. These international documenters are usually chosen for their internet presence and social media influence which organisers want to benefit from by way of exposure. I had been documenting graffiti locally and abroad since 2003, had achieved recognition by members of the local graffiti subculture, and had a limited public profile as a researcher and documenter. Yet, I had never been invited to document the festival. Martha Cooper and Halopigg are American documenters who have highly followed Instagram accounts, the former having been invited to Mural Festival in 2013 and the latter from 2016-2017. Both were treated as VIPs and were given full and absolute access to the artists and festival areas, and had much more personal handling by the event organisers than I was afforded. The Mural Festival organizers did not even know who I was up until 2017, the year following my fieldwork in Miami. The reason why I obtained a media pass to be a part of the documentation team for Mural Festival 2017 was that I had tracked down Andre and we had sat for several interviews earlier in 2017 and he had offered it to me then. I have been documenting the local scene for well over a decade, while Halopigg and Martha Cooper have only come to the city a few times, and only for the events. Even though in my opinion both are well deserving and produce remarkable work that I highly respect, I still felt like I was being treated second rate. So I could definitely relate to what Ms. Teri, Monk-e, and other artists had expressed to me about their experiences with the local festival.

Community actors in street art and graffiti, like Fluke and Andre, try to negotiate with the system and ensure that all community actors have a place and opportunity to not just express themselves but to find success and maybe a career path. It is not easy and friendships are lost along the way or made harder to maintain. For example Fluke and Axe, parted ways for a few years. Axe needed to pursue his own path and was not agreeable to Fluke's commercial approach. They are still friends, but things different, you can sense it between them that they do not share the same vision or values entirely anymore. They still work together on projects here and there,

but not like it used to be. Andre has to constantly negotiate with graffiti and street art communities and the municipal and private interests as well. He finds himself constantly being pulled in one direction or the other, inevitably stepping on someone's toes in the process.

Another contradiction which emerges from urban branding strategies which attempt to use street art muralism to re-order and control city space is that they encourage more disorder and illicit activity such as graffiti and informal jams. Graffiti writers and even some street artists take advantage and initiative to carve out their own space amid the formally managed and curated street art mural works of these festivals. I have observed graffiti writers and artists from a number of crews (K6A, DA, SVC, AG, 203s, and others) taking the opportunity to paint in side alleys every single year of the festival in Montreal, and in Miami and other cities during urban arts festivals. Moreover, their attempts to take space during these festivals has become more brazen the larger and more successful these events have grown.

During Mural Festival in 2018, for example, members of BTH went over a mural that the artist Zilon had painted the year prior on a building taking up the corner next to Portugal Park. The writers even had fake credentials which were fashioned to appear as artist passes for the current festival years. Locals were seemingly off put and someone must have called it in because a festival organiser arrived to question them. One of the writers responded that he was given permission by the property owner to paint a commemorative piece around their crew name. The Mural Festival representative responded that as far as he knew, they had not been given any permission. The writers apologized and said that they would be done soon and kept on painting. There was an awkward moment as the festival representative tried to be confrontational about it but they just looked at him indifferently and told him to figure it out while they finished up. Not knowing what else to do he departed to reconfirm or perhaps to get back up, but by the time he returned the writers had finished their commemorative/Crew piece and had left the scene *(fig. 3.21)*. Meanwhile, across the street on the abandoned garage the writer Sake was clandestinely getting up over some older graffiti in broad daylight. People, tourists walking by who caught him painting thought he was part of the festival and were trying to take photos of his painting. His buddy (Aper) was watching over him and would sternly instruct people not to take his photo and even went so far as to accost them to delete the images a couple of times. Sake was watching too and being smart enough to go in and get a bit done while no one was paying that much attention. If he saw someone trying to take a shot or taking notice of him he would either stop and ignore them or tell them not to take his picture. If it were not the

festival and incredibly public character of the street artists, graffiti writers like Sake, Aper, those from BTM crew, and many others in the alley ways and side streets would not be able to brazenly get up in broad daylight without more attention or consequences. These examples also show that no one really knows the full extent to their supposed authority or what the boundaries are, that is, what is allowed or not, at many of these festivals which gets played out through transgressions like these. Clever interplay by these illicit artists reveals that there is considerable room for personal gain and benefit to be made by those willing to take the risk.

Still, many of those that I interviewed did not hold any major issues with the event or it organisers. In fact, many applauded them

Figure 3.21: BTH, Mural Festival, Montreal. 2018. Photo by Kris Murray.

for their efforts and thought that the event brought positive attention to the local graffiti and street arts communities as well as the city. What respondents were most concerned overall with was the commoditizing effect of the festival to graffiti and street arts and gentrification of the neighborhoods where these larger festivals were taking place. Respondents who had the greatest misgivings regarding the event and street art muralism came from the graffiti subculture. Graffiti purists had the most vociferous opinions and expressed quite clearly that they would never paint in Mural Festival or any sort of street art event. At the same time, graffiti artists who were given opportunities to paint for Mural Festival all tended to respond that they were happy to be involved and grateful for the opportunity to apply their talents to a larger, even monumental, wall space. In fact, many of the local artists involved in Mural Festival since its inception in 2013 until 2018 said that they had painted their first big walls at the event. I think that this ambivalence, and their attitude change after the fact, has a lot to do with the longstanding

traditional attitudes that come out of graffiti, such as not being a sell out to the subculture.

Monk-e said that there are real tensions between street art muralism and the graffiti community in not just Montreal but in every city where graffiti and graffiti art is being supplanted. These tensions, he says, surround the claim to wall spaces in the city that are enacted informally through illicit painting and formally through legally sanctioned mural arts programs, graffiti arts festivals, and events:

> Most of the international street art festivals…don't include graffiti or they don't include the real way of the street. We see a gap between the real people painting walls in the streets illegally and the people that come from out of town for a pay check. That's why all the murals are getting vandalized now. It's the new trend for the last two or three years…Not only the Mural Fest, but A'Shop murals, my murals, every mural…It's kind of like, if graffiti was a response to the growing world of publicity out there, more publicity, more billboards, all of this. Graffiti boomed out of this. And it's the exact same thing were seeing [now]. From the legal, funded, big murals you see again…a response to that saying 'Hey! We're not represented in what you're creating! It's our walls also!

Monk-e considers himself to be a graffiti artist and muralist and he sees Mural Festival as being more street art oriented. "They take people from the street art scene –the trendy ones." He says that there are some festivals which include graffiti writing and art in their programs, and there are graffiti artists who have participated in Mural Festival before, but often it is just those who are considered to be trendy who get invites. "Often the selection of artists is more based on their reputation and their following than on the quality of their art or their originality." Being passed over a number of times to be included in urban arts festivals in Montreal or across Canada has also left him feeling "underestimated, undervalued, [and] underappreciated" he says. Ultimately he feels that he has a unique style and that his artistic skills are at a top level along with many of the street artists who have been selected over him:

> I feel that I should have access to these [events/festivals]. And I feel that the people who are invited are way less creative and [are] way less talented. So I feel offended. People use projectors and trace and they are experts in Photoshop. They are not experts in painting. They have been painting murals for three years. This is where my frustration comes from. I feel that I deserve more, I've paid more my dues than the majority of people that have the opportunity to be in festivals."

Five8 who has a history in both graffiti writing and street art mentioned that he has enjoyed working with Mural Festival, that he has no complaints, and the same with Under Pressure. They have both always been "good experiences" for him that have allowed him to get his art up and seen. Even then, he finds himself personally conflicted, between his inclusion in an event which uses street art

and graffiti muralism to promote of Montreal's tourism industry and corporate brands, and how the event helps to improve his portfolio and professional networks. "The goal of Mural is not murals, ok? Murals are an attraction. Murals is what gets the attention," he says. "The point of Mural is promotion. They are a marketing agency. The companies that sponsor the festival...the parties that they throw...There's lots of money being spent and probably most of it on the artists department...on lifts and paint and stuff. But for someone like me...not really complaining about it too loudly because I want to paint that wall, I want the attention."

Kevin Ledo missed the first edition of the festival in 2013 but made sure to contact the organisers before the following year. His persistence paid off as he was invited to paint in 2014 and was given a three storey wall on which he painted a portrait of Mary Socktish, a member of the Hupa Tribe. It was also the largest wall he had ever painted at the time. He says that his participation in Mural Festival in 2014 "was a huge springboard for me. In the sense that I got onto a more of a global radar." Although Kevin was already moving towards painting larger walls and murals, it was this wall and the online attention it garnered that helped to get him more commissions the following years. His 2017portrait of the late Leonard Cohen which remains the largest mural ever painted by a single artist in the city, and perhaps the country. Suffice it to say his second mural also brought him significant attention online and has helped to further position him as a premier street art muralist in Canada. Although Jason has had some issues with how the festival has capitalized on its success and that it could be doing more socially oriented work with the local community, he is still a strong supporter of the event and the art that it is producing. Many other street artists from Montreal, Canada, and across the United States have participated in Mural Festival in the years following 2013, all of whom have had positive remarks on their experience painting for the festival.

Ezar, a younger writer in Montreal and I were talking during Mural Festival in 2017. He was hanging out with Deep and some other writers who were painting a permission spot just next to where Scribe was painting his mural for the festival that year. The owner of the building they are painting on came out, an elderly lady, thin and with greying hair, who seemed to know the guys. Deep gave her a kiss on the cheek and a hug when she came out and greeted them. They seemed to have a good and working relationship as they were discussing some of the elements on the wall including their pieces. She seemed very happy with the work. Ezar and I were talking about graffiti productions, like Trife Life and others in the past. He mentioned to me that he thought that these past graffiti murals really set the way the ground work for contemporary muralism and approaches to getting walls painted. Now there is some

disenfranchisement with the graffiti community with all this street art stuff coming in and he says that many writers feel like they have been relegated to the side and are hitting back, so to speak, by tagging and crossing out murals. I mentioned Grandma Graffiti by A'Shop and K6A from 2013 and how I thought that it was the only way that graffiti productions are going to get up are in artistic sense like that. He seemed to agree. A classic production is just not going to be accepted anymore say, like with Under Pressure, but has to conform to a particular aesthetic and needs to incorporate other stylistic or artistic elements in it as well.

Axe spoke about the Grandma Graffiti mural again when we were hanging out at Dodo's wall after sunset socializing and having some drinks. We all had a few drinks in us and were a little tipsy. He was talking about how 'Mural festival is for grand mamas', like it's a joke sort of thing that they had themed their 2013 wall along. Originally was Hoek's wall, he had painted it previously. So having him in on the wall was important to be sure that they were including him but also to display to other members of the subculture, to those who cared at least, that Hoek was painting with them, and thus legitimating their claim to the wall. Axe explained that he and Dodo had put their foot down the morning that they started the mural and that the wall had to be something else, not what Hoek had in mind, regardless of it was his wall prior. This was not the first time that I had heard Axe talk about the need to not only respect the continuance of the artist painting the wall that they had had previously, but also of respecting the values and rules of the subculture.

Axe also talked about the loss of old walls, but for him the biggest insult is that they [the organisers of Mural Festival] are giving these old walls away to new painters, some from out of town, when the original writers and artists who had done those walls had put in their ten thousand hours on the streets, paid their dues. He thinks that they are good artists but they not put the same time in on the streets, and the festival just gives walls away that have been managed, regulated, and painted by local crews for years. Even Kevin Ledo, who he sees a great and successful artist, has not put in the hours on the streets, in his opinion. To Axe, this is a big insult but he also said that maybe he is living too nostalgically and that his wanton for an older time and a respect for a wall like that is part of an old regime or culture. He also said that "maybe that time is over" and that he needs to move on. He totally respects artists for who they are and their work but it is still a heavy hit to take from the event organisers. He feels that graffiti art and muralism have not had their place respectfully noted in the progression of streets-based arts into street art muralism. In this way, he says, many graffiti writers and artists feel snubbed by the seemingly quick acceptance and support of street art muralism, and like many other nostalgic writers and

artists, he sees graffiti culture being supplanted by the creative industries growing around it.

The concerns mentioned here by graffiti writers and artists regarding the uplifting of street art muralism over graffiti reveal that those in the subculture feel largely powerless to stop the dispossession and dislocation of their subculture. Sure, writers hit back by crossing out or going over street art murals, especially those that are painted over old graffiti walls but also those done by out of town artists who are considered not to have paid their dues and are undeserving of respect. Maybe Axe was right, maybe it is the end of an era and the values that surrounded graffiti muralism and mentorship in the subculture have largely passed in favor of the more fluid and malleable values in street art muralism. As much as this may be true, there are other reasons why members of the graffiti subculture have been unable to recuperate lost space to urban branding and redevelopment projects. These can be found in the connectionist and networking muralist attitudes of street artists, as well as graffiti artists like those in A'Shop, that look outwards and are willing to partner with or accept funding and support from corporate and institutional sponsors. The purist attitudes of graffiti writers and artists, including those who organize graffiti related events, tend to look inwards towards the subculture and are untrusting of institutions that are seen as threatening. Purists are also opposed to 'selling out' to corporate sponsorships for fear of losing authenticity and creative control of their art. One of the results of this inability to trust or work with institutional partnership or support has been the loss of more walls and the continued marginalization of graffiti related events and culture.

Granted there have been more graffiti events and jams over the years across the island of Montreal than street art, like Under Pressure, Meeting of Styles, Hip Hop You Don't Stop, Sino's Tunnel Jam, and numerous smaller events in a number of boroughs (most popularly Lachine, NDG, Lasalle, Verdun, and Hochelaga). Of these only a couple have survived over the years, but even they must continually reorganize the spaces they have left and broker new relationships with a dwindling list of interested patrons so that graffiti artists can have a place to paint every year. Meeting of Styles and Under Pressure originally took place in central downtown Montreal but were pushed out due to redevelopment and the efforts by prevention and management departments to curtail graffiti vandalism. Meeting of Styles found a new location in Cote-St-Paul, a mixed commercial-industrial area near the city, but it soon was scaled down to a more private, invite-only event. Under Pressure found a new location in the Plateau over 20 years ago but organizers have to find creative ways to make it work and new walls for painters almost every year as properties around it are redeveloped. Properties

also change hands and new owners have been less interested in giving their walls to the event. Hip Hop You Don't Stop *(fig. 3.22)* is held in Girouard Park in NDG every summer where graffiti art is painted on box and container trucks donated by local businesses. This event has no permanent wall space to begin with and so long as a few local businesses are interested in receiving some cheap and hip advertising on their trucks then this event will continue to have space for graffiti artists to paint and express themselves. If not then event organisers must use plywood stands which graffiti artists are generally disinterested to paint. Meanwhile Mural Festival has expanded its territory each consecutive year, painting new murals in boroughs expanding its boundaries further from the event's main area in the Plateau.

Regardless of the criticisms that creative cities polices and ideas have received, particularly those levelled at Florida, they have still

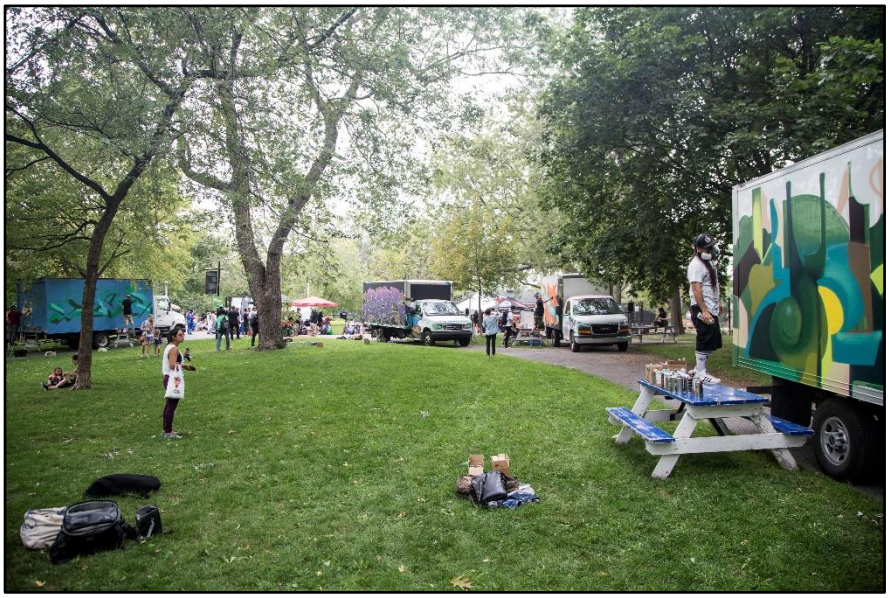

Figure 3.22: Hip Hop You Don't Stop, Notre-Dame-de-Graces. Montreal. 2019. Photo by Kris Murray.

contributed to a widening discussion and literature regarding sustainable urban communities and creative economies. Multiculturalism, diversity, inclusivity, tolerance and creativity are just as important as innovation, industry and technology, and in many cases the success of projects depends on these elements coming together. This is not always easy as it often involves competing interests and attitudes which can potentially derail mural arts projects or disenfranchise artists and other stakeholders. Harvey (1989) reminds us that we cannot ignore the benefits of competition and entrepreneurialism in helping to develop new and creative patterns of urban development, even if the end results are serial reproduction. As long as mural arts festivals keep getting used as urban branding projects in an effort to cash in on the urban cool of

street art it seems that this will continue to be the outcome. The artists, organisers, and other related stakeholders that I have interviewed and spoken with seem to be acutely aware of the shift towards corporatized management and the commoditization of arts festivals. While some regard this with disdain and refuse to participate, others are working actively with event organisers engaging in experimental methods, trying new partnerships. and developing their own local artistic brands.

Finally, and perhaps most important, is the need to recognize and include local streets based arts communities much more actively and explicitly in the management and coordination of these growing cultural industries. By doing so, city governments and event organisers reduce the possibility of generating tensions between community stakeholders and ensure that their hard work and efforts are not wasted. Still, even in cities like Montreal and Miami where local graffiti and street artists are involved in urban branding and development projects there are still significant issues of representation and inclusivity that are yet to be resolved. Ultimately, what is needed is more comprehensive and flexible urban management which relies on and gives space for the knowledge and expertise of the local arts community and subcultural stakeholders. Working together helps to build cooperation, trust, and transparency between different groups, organizations, institutions, local businesses, property owners, and the public. Such relational improvements would make these projects more reliable and cost effective as local actors are better placed to identify and access both available and potential material and human resources.

IV
Citizen Artist, Citizen Muralist: Reconstituting the Political through Graffiti and Street art Muralism

This chapter focuses on how socially engaged street art muralism is being mobilized towards activist projects confronting social injustices and raising of public awareness to global issues. Socially engaged art is typically associated with projects external to institutions that seek to accomplish "different kinds of interventions or artistic social work, often intended to create some kind of dialogue in conflict-ridden urban space."[198] Street artists may pursue activist projects alone but many also collaborate with community stakeholders or non-profit organizations to produce socially engaged mural art. Another popular strategy for many street artists who are interested in getting into activist work is to participate in events and festivals which are themed along social, cultural, political, and environmental issues. Although socially engaged street art muralism shares the same qualities as other forms of activist art, these large-scale mural arts projects demand the type of funding, organization, and permission that only private or institutional support can provide. In working with institutional partners and sponsors, artists and organizers can find themselves struggling with contingencies and contradictions which arise from tensions surrounding project goals, the allocation of resources, funding, and management. Efforts to organize, commodify, control, and standardize street art muralism more generally also places limits on how these activist projects creatively confront and critique the status quo in public spaces. Artists and organizers must navigate these inconsistencies while struggling to establish better *vocabularies and repertoires of practice and knowledge* so that their activist projects successfully reach their goals.

Chantal Mouffe (2018) argues that neoliberalism has contributed to a post-political reality which has all but stifled political antagonisms and debate. The rejection of oppositional and antagonistic positions has reduced, and in some cases all but removed, symbolic spaces where conflicts surrounding power relations and claims to rights have been enacted.[199] Instead, symbolic spaces are packaged, produced and controlled by commercial and government interests, authorities, and actors, often with an intent to generate economic outcomes. As a critical artistic practice then, socially engaged muralism can generate *opportunities for novel or radical forms of democratic practice* by creating new symbolic spaces where conflicts and claims can be rightfully articulated. In

doing so, socially engaged muralism broadly lends to the recovery and deepening of representative and participative democracy.

Socially engaged street art muralism also presents opportunities to create enduring chains of equivalency between different democratic struggles. The contradictions and paradoxes which emerge from neoliberal hegemony create sectional divisions and particularities between different social, cultural, and political groups. Existing governments typically ignore demands and, at best, give contradictory problematic, and half-baked responses or solutions. The rejection that these different groups share then creates the conditions where an alliance can form among them. Sectional divisions or particularities through chains of equivalence then become the mechanism by which disparate groups can create a link between them to approach a more unified set of general demands. Socially engaged street art muralism can help to bring these disparate groups together by helping to interpret and visually articulate their claims and demands.

Street artists have always been engaged in what could generally be called *interpretive games*[200] that play with the form and shape of the city to communicate ideas, attitudes, and critiques. Keith Haring used his iconography to raise awareness about homosexuality, safe sex, and AIDS in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Billboard Liberation Front (BLF) have been subverting corporate ads for over two decades.[201] Ron English, another prolific billboard painter, culture jammer and self-styled pop iconoclast, has been delivering his own brand of subversive social and political commentary since the 1980s. His *popaganda* is a playful take on brands, often combining characters from comics with iconographic art historical pieces. Banksy's street art is almost always provocative and satirical if not unusual and amusing. In 2005 the artist painted a series of ironic and suggestive images on the Palestinian side of the West Bank Wall which helped to raise awareness to the oppressive and unjust conditions in Gaza. Two years later Banksy returned with a group of artists from Pictures On Walls (POW), a UK-based street artist collective.[202] They held their annual pop-up squat art scale and exhibition, *Santa's Ghetto,* in Bethlehem that year which featured international and local artists auctioning off works to raise money for aids groups. The POW artists also took time to paint some more of their social and political commentary on the West Bank Wall which also helped to draw international attention to the plight of the Palestinian people. Since then many more graffiti and street artists have traveled to the West Bank and other parts of Palestine to contribute critical, creative, or playful art. At the same time, there are countless messages from Palestinians and other locals voicing their opposition to the oppression by the Israeli government, likely at even greater risk than these street artists. Taken together, the West

Bank wall is one of the largest collection of protest messages in the world.

Sheppard Fairey is another street artist who has been actively engaged in anti-war activism since the early 2000s, collaborating with numerous social and political campaigns over the last twenty years.[203] Although much of his work could be called anti-establishment, he gave his art in support of Obama's 2008 presidential campaign.[204] In a 2009 interview Fairey was described by journalist Antonio D'Amrosio of The Progressive[205] as a *citizen artist* to reflect both the shift in his message from *Obey* to *Hope* and the urgency that he had embraced in the production and dissemination of his work. This was the first time he had been given such recognition as street art was still seen as a form of vandalism, mostly being done illegally and without permission. In fact, it may have been the first time that any street artist had been accorded such an honorific in the media, likely bolstered by his HOPE poster being selected as a primary visual by the Obama campaign.[206] In 2016 Fairey did not put his art behind any of the candidates, citing the lack of hope and high levels of frustration and hostility in American politics. Instead he collaborated with the estate of the late photographer Jim Marshall to produce a fine art exhibition, *American Civics,* held at the San Francisco Art Exchange. The exhibit featured five serialized poster works interpreting some of Marshall's photography from the 1960s, several of which depicted the portraits of civil rights activists Cesar Chavez, Fannie Lee Chaney, and Johnny Cash. The exhibit was meant to reflect on some of America's enduring social justice issues: gun control, income inequality, mass incarceration, voting and workers' rights. In promotion of the exhibit Fairey also completed two public murals, one of Cesar Chavez and the other of Fannie Le Chaney, in downtown San Francisco.[207]

Over the last decade the term *citizen artist* has become increasingly popular to describe street artists whose work is geared towards social and political engagement. More specifically, it is used to describe artists who do work in or with economically or socially stressed communities. These artists may work alone or with institutional support and funding to achieve their project goals. Many of the street artists I have documented in my work have either produced or participated in socially engaged mural arts projects with socially stressed communities. The primary purpose of these projects and activations is to be transformative, both in how they beautify city space, bring community member together, and elevate public awareness to social, political, and environmental issues. This contrasts sharply with the concept of citizenship advocated by Engin Isin (2012) who argues that activist citizens enact claims to rights and call out injustices by crossing both symbolic (legal, political,

social, or cultural) and physical (private or public) boundaries creating new possibilities for politically subjective orientations and identities. According to Isin, street artists like Fairey, English, the BLF, and Banksy engage in acts of solidarity and citizenship when they take space and paint *without* permission. In using their symbolic and cultural capital to transform sites of oppression into sites of contention they instigate discussions, help to articulate injustices and their demands for redress for those engaged in struggles unable to do so themselves. He argues that the critical analysis of these acts of citizenship can help to develop *vocabularies and repertoires of action* to better understand both the conditions and scales of interventions, including the legal structure that could enable social actors to act as citizens in this way. An important part of this process involves taking seriously the justifications that ordinary social actors provide for their disobedient deeds, including their competencies and narratives. Understood from this perspective, citizenship is more than just an individual's status, it is also a process involving creative, inventive, and autonomous ways of becoming politically subjective. Isin also emphasizes the need to differentiate between the performativity and the enactment of citizenship. On the one hand, *the performance of citizenship* produces a subject characterized by repetitive and pedestrian forms of scripted behaviors such as voting or paying taxes. On the other hand, *the enactment of citizenship* produces a subject characterized by deliberate and purposeful acts, often disobedient ones, which create ruptures and contradictions in normative scripts and narratives. In doing so, the enactment of citizenship draws attention to these inconsistencies and creates possibilities for new types of activist subjects. Importantly, the expression of a demand or claim is tied to social action; in order for any demand or claim to be recognized, *it must be exercised*.

Although the above examples show how street art can be an effective tool to communicate critique, enacting interventions unlawfully can limit the fuller potential in reaching audiences, creating chains of equivalency, and formulating more serious and organized responses to societal issues. Besides the recent projects that Fairey and English have pursued, the above street artists all embraced purist mentalities and disseminated their work informally through clandestine artistic interventions which aimed to culture jam rather than establish a wider dialogue with other similarly oriented rights or activist groups. As it will be discussed in the following sections, creative forms of citizenship are possible if artists are willing to take on muralist attitudes, accept institutional support, and paint with permission. Fairey's shift to doing public street art muralism and fine arts exhibits at a number of galleries and museums has helped him to communicate his ideas to a national audience. His public work has also been instrumental in helping to bring a number

of related social justice and civil rights issues together into the same national conversation. In doing so Fairey has helped to create possibilities for new forms of radical democratic practice and rights based activism. Moreover, repertoires of action may not serve the interests of muralists as much as they do purists, as muralists aim to engage publicly with audiences in more substantial and meaningful ways. Like the activist subjects that Isin speaks about, socially engaged street art muralists also want to enact claims to rights and call out injustices, the main difference being that they do so openly and with permission. The justifications that these artists put forth for pursuing their activist projects as well as their competencies and the narratives they both paint and find themselves embedded in also need to be taken seriously.

The repertoires of practice and knowledge that surround socially engaged street art muralism share similarities to the repertoires of action that Isin began to structure and which have since been rearticulated in the work by Clément Steuer (2017), though with several notable differences. Firstly, socially engaged street art muralists do not take or occupy symbolic spaces, they create them through semi-permanent art installations (murals) that, in many cases, are done collaboratively with the communities they are painted in. It is not just about being a voice for the voiceless but showing how to use one's voice and creativity to cross symbolic borders. Secondly, socially engaged street art muralists also utilize electronic and communication technologies, like social media, not necessarily to seek recourse, but to raise awareness to important injustices and issues. As discussed previously, the connectionist logic and culture which permeates the street art world is dependent on electronic technologies and socially engaged street artists have, to varying degrees of success, been able to harness this virtual resource towards their activist projects. Self-exposure becomes a latent feature that socially engaged artists may enjoy but typically they take a step back in favor of promoting a cause or drawing attention to a claim for the redressing of an injustice. Thirdly, socially engaged street art collectives tend to approach horizontal forms of social organization but there tends to be leader or artistic director selected when they come together to get projects done. As well, attitudes may vary with some collectives being more horizontally structured than others with leadership duties held by multiple members. Lastly, socially engaged street artist collectives tend to have a rhetoric centered on universal values such as dignity and hope, social justice, human rights, and democracy but environmentalism and conservation have also increasingly become important.

The broadening of the social and economic terrains in which artists are working is crucial for the success of activist projects,

especially those external to institutions. Part of this discussion then also explores the tensions generated when neo-management attitudes and strategies attempt to curtail activist orientations among socially engaged street artists by mobilizing them towards performative rather than activist outcomes. At the same time, institutional support, both financial and logistical, remains an important component for the success of street art mural events, projects, and festivals, especially those which are socially engaged. Big mural projects demand special equipment, materials, and permissions in order to be accomplished which can reach upwards of thousands of dollars in operating costs. Tensions arise between artists, organizers, and sponsors as they try to retain some level of control over project goals. On the one hand, artists and organizers need to balance institutional support with creative and operational freedoms in order to ensure that the message they intend to communicate does not become colonized by state rhetoric or commodified by private interests. On the other hand, sponsors and institutions want to ensure that their projects are not completely socially mobilized. Understanding why artists and organizers resist or cooperate with institutional support then can help to articulate what the role of representative institutions should be in developing and expanding new industries. Representative institutions need to facilitate and support discussion and debate between competing social and political discourses, including those visualized through graffiti and street art muralism. Artists and organizers also need to appreciate the economic and political mandates of sponsoring agencies and institutions.

There are several questions this chapter aims to respond to. Firstly, how do street art muralists come into contact with activist groups to create socially engaged muralism? Secondly, how are street art muralists, as citizen artists, uniquely positioned to contribute to the formation of repertoires of practice and knowledge widening the terrain for socially engaged art? Thirdly, how do artists and other stakeholders navigate institutional contradictions and inconsistencies to ensure the integrity of their projects? That is, how do artists balance the responsiveness of their art with the demands of sponsoring agencies?

In examining the work of two street art muralists, Jason Botkin and Kevin Ledo, the following sections provide an ethnographic analysis of the evolving sets of interpersonal and working relationships they built through their socially engaged street art mural projects. Both artists regularly participate in or help to co-manage activist projects that they have a stake in to some degree. Kevin, has been actively collaborating with several non-profit organizations and participating in community mural projects over the last few years. Jason has also participated in a number of activist projects as well as taking on an organizational role in several of

them. As a co-manager of activist street art projects Jason's experiences can provide a unique perspective on the tensions which develop between artists and patrons around project goals, funding and management. Contextualizing their experiences within the scope of this larger discussion on art, activism, and citizenship can help us to better understand how these projects come to inform activist attitudes and help to build enduring chains of equivalency.

Identity, Representation, and Authenticity

Kevin Ledo is a second generation Portuguese-Canadian artist who has been regularly travelling and painting street art murals for a variety of events, festivals, and community projects with nongovernment organizations since 2014. As an Anglophone Quebecer who cannot speak Portuguese or French all that well he often finds himself struggling to identify with one group or culture fully. Growing up sort of in between languages and cultures and never really feeling like he really fit in anywhere, he says that identity became a major preoccupation in all of his work. Although he explored themes related to identity in his canvass work for years, it was not until he started to paint large-scale street art murals that he started to really think about issues of identity more seriously.

I've never had a critical aspect to my art work…It was always my personal explorations. Once I started doing mural art work, then I was in the public realm…I felt the urge to do something that is relevant to the people there or…on the broader spectrum, just to say something…I can't say that it's been like this every time, but it definitely has been more geared towards the populations that are there or some kind of issue.

In 2014 he was given the opportunity to paint his first large-scale solo mural in Montreal's second Mural Festival, and as such it got him thinking about bigger things. He decided to paint a portrait of Mary Socktish, a member of the Hupa Tribe from northern California *(fig. 4.1).* At first he was hesitant to paint her portrait as he thought that he would face heavy criticism for appropriating indigenous culture. "I was at the time thinking about First Nations (and) if I am having issues with my identity, imagine what it's like for people who were here first, everything they had to live through. Do they want to identify with being Canadian?"

The photo he worked from was taken about a century ago by Edward Curtis, an early American photographer and anthropologist (ethnologist) who dedicated his work to documenting and photographing Native Americans. He said he took time to research the image and the photographer and discovered that there was some controversy regarding his methods and intentions.

In the end I felt ok…there's good reasons to criticize him and there is also good reasons to celebrate him. There would be no imagery like that if he had not done

it, this is historical stuff...but, some of [the images] are inaccurate…glorified, romanticized…at the same time this man …sat with [these] people and they trusted him.

Towards the end of the 19th century so-called salvage anthropology utilized photography as a method to collect measurable scientific data on the disappearing cultures that were being wiped out with the spread of Western civilization. Such use of photography was criticized as being heavily positivistic, Eurocentric, and unrealistic in its attempts to portray the 'noble savage' by manipulating both the subjects and the settings of the images taken. Curtis had been known to stage his photographs, pay his subjects in money, food, or goods, and alter his images to remove contemporary objects to give them an 'authentic' appearance.

Figure 4.1: *Mary Socktish*, Kevin Ledo. Mural Festival. Montreal. 2014. Photo by Kris Murray (2015)

In the end Kevin said that "The only thing I wish is that I had used somebody from this region, that's what I really wanted to do." Although it was not an image of an indigenous Cree, Mohawk or Inuit woman, several representative indigenous populations in and around Montreal, he felt that he was still helping to make indigeneity more visible in the city. "You could just imagine who this woman was, what she had to say, her face, the stories it tells, the expression, the lines." He added that, "you don't always know what the best thing to do is," but that it is important to question and think about the narratives and histories associated with the images used for mural projects. As well, artists should not ignore how their own emotional connection comes to inform their work too.

Using his art to make social critique is important to him, but he says that "it's not always critique either. More often than not it's celebrating." Kevin paints his subjects in moments of contemplation, intimacy, and wonderment, capturing and interpreting emotional nuances and having them tell a story to the audience. "It brings in a mystery to the image. It brings in more, it brings something else." By engaging his audience on an affective

level, he wants to draw out emotional responses and challenge viewers to explore their own feelings and ideas about their relations to each other and society. He says that it is easy to point fingers but it can end up taking away from the original intention of the work sometimes. “There’s always finger pointing and it separates people. If you do something that resonates well, then you’re still spreading the idea of good about that subject. You’re putting a positive light on something there.” By painting celebratory images the wall becomes a space where that can be appreciated without him necessarily pushing his opinion or views down their throats. In doing so, his mural art precipitates the conversation by providing the subject, but does not colonize it with his point of view. His mural becomes a space where these conversations can occur organically, helping to create more natural and collaborative possibilities for thinking and awareness. “Just the fact that that it’s there will most likely start a conversation right?”

Over the next five years Kevin would progressively become more involved with non-government organizations through socially engaged mural projects. His work with two organizations in particular, AptArt and the RAW Project, have deeply influenced his attitude and approach to painting street art murals. These activist projects that Kevin lent his art to were also not without their own contradictions, tensions, and problems. These would help him, other artists and organizers to develop new repertoires of practice and knowledge that would come to inform later projects. Kevin’s growth as a socially conscious artist was directly connected to the development of these new repertoires which came out of his collaboration with these organizations. Although socially engaged mural projects external to institutions are important to developing counter hegemonic repertoires of practice and knowledge, it will also be shown how working with institutions can lead to more positive relations with communities and potential for lasting change

Painting and Collaborating in Open Spaces

AptArt (Awareness & Prevention through Art) is a non-profit organization which brings artists to at risk communities to create collaborative public art. AptArt has been operating since 2010 helping to reinvigorate and transform communities through collaborative mural projects, workshops, and exhibitions.[208] Kevin says that “what they mostly do is go to places that are war torn or to places where people are displaced and work with children, and make art, and bring in artists to create a mural.” He worked with AprArt from 2015 to 2016 painting murals in the United States, Jordan, and Lebanon as well as participating in an exhibition in the Latin American Museum in Miami. “They are really great, bold people,

trying to do good things. Sometimes I feel like I just show up and paint but they are doing amazing stuff." AptArt has also organized or participated in projects in the Kenya, Congo, Iraq, and Gaza. He was part of the *Paint Outside the Lines and Open Space* projects which use collaborative mural arts to connect with at risk youth and communities to instigate dialogue and reflection on important social and cultural issues. With funding provided by the USAID Takamol Gender Program, Aptart's *Open Space Project* was able to bring in both local and international artists to paint murals and hold workshops with local youth in several cities and communities in Jordan. A mutual friend put Kevin in touch with Samantha Robison, one of the executive directors of the organization, who asked him to participate in their upcoming mural project in that year focusing on gender equality.

Kevin was one of five artists[209] selected to paint eight large-scale street art murals in the cities of Rusaifa, Zarqa, Ajloun, Jerash, Sweimeh, Al-Karak, and two more in Central and East Amman. His two murals, *Change from the Inside (fig. 4.2)* and *Create Equality (fig. 4.3),* were painted in the cities of Zarqa and Al-Karak. He painted these murals back to back, which was something not uncommon for him and other graffiti and street art muralists, but it was exhausting and he had to overcome some environmental obstacles that he did not account for. Getting the opportunity to participate in such a meaningful project in collaboration with an international NGO was what he said made it all worthwhile. Moreover, Kevin said that he worked with local youth in the production of the murals through workshops where they were able to collaborate with him in theory, design, and production. These mural projects have had a strong influence on his attitude and trajectory as an artist. He has come out of these projects with the belief that should connect with the communities that they are done in and speak to important social and cultural justice issues.

His first mural was painted in the city of Zarqa, one of the country's most populous urban centers, located just 15 miles away from the capital city of Amman. Certainly more progressive than other Middle-Eastern countries, women are highly literate (90 percentile), have expanded roles in the household and are increasingly holding important administrative positions in the government and the military.[210] Although most women observed full body Islamic style dress code, there were some who wore pants and long shirts instead. Even then, most women still do not have the right to choose who they marry or where they may attend school or work, if they are allowed to at all. Still, Kevin said that Zarqa seemed more

progressive and less demanding of the women who he met and interacted with throughout the course of the mural project.

As the theme of the project was gender equality, Kevin wanted to express that through the symbolism of men and women working cooperatively face the challenges together. Moreover, he did not

Figure 4.2: *Create Equality*, Kevin Ledo, APTart Gender Equality project, Zarqa, Jordan. Photo by Samantha Robison (2015)

want to come across as imposing his ideals so he needed to respect the cultural attitudes towards gender. At the same time, he wanted to try to instigate conversation about these prevailing attitudes.

> I had to be very subtle in my imagery. There were some criticisms about having painted a veiled woman, with a hijab. I wouldn't do anything else. I mean, this city was 95% covered…it's very subtle, you see her holding up her hand, touching a man's hand, the focus is on her. That's why I feel that it was successful because it was subtle with a really positive message…You want it to resonate with them.

The woman who ended up being the main subject of the mural works in Zarqa but lives in Amman. Kevin met and spoke to her about the mural project and although in the final painting she is unmasked, she normally wears a Hijab while in public. Kevin explained that for the mural he wanted to have her hand and that of a man joined together to show unity and trust between men and women. As it turned out her husband was nearby, and, after talking to him and explaining his idea, he agreed to participate as well.

Aptart organisers set up workshops with local youth and young adults in the neighborhood to discuss what they thought were important issues surrounding gender equality and their aspirations for a more inclusive and representative society. Kevin was not able to take part because he arrived later than expected so he ended up

working with some youth afterwards to help them visualize their thoughts for the mural. “I had to choose how they would make their mark on the wall. So for the first one I decided that they would be painting…messages all along the background.” The finished mural stands 35 feet high by 30 feet across, taking up the entire side of a four story commercial building. Using filters of purple and pink hues it emphasizes dignity, respect, trust, and harmony between genders encapsulating the message that a healthy community and society requires efforts, contributions, and cooperation of both men and women.

Kevin’s second mural began production immediately after the first in Al-Karak about 140 miles south of Amman. A smaller city, Al-Karak supports about 30 thousand residents of mixed Christian and Muslim faiths, and is supported mainly through tourism. The location of the mural was to be the back side of a two-story residential building in one of the city’s quiet neighborhoods. This mural measured 20 by 15 feet, though the bottom portion stretched along the backside of the building for another 30 feet. Similar the Zarqa mural this project would also include the ideas and messages of local youth surrounding gender, equality, and hope. The subject of his painting this time was a young girl from the neighborhood who had simply happened to walk by with her father as Kevin was preparing the wall and setting everything up. After talking to them and receiving permission Kevin took a photograph of the local girl that he then used as a reference to paint the mural.

Shortly after starting he had to postpone the production because of the *snowpocalypse*, heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures which occurs once a year in the region. Kevin said that with the snow and rain Al-Karak was some of the hardest environmental conditions he had ever painted in at that point. He had to figure out DIY solutions to the freezing weather, so he was delayed and did not get to put as much time into painting that wall as he had hoped. When he got the site there was about a foot and half of snow and ice on the walls and he had three days to finish it.

> It was so difficult and so frustrating. I was chipping away with my brush, the ice, and then the sun came out and started melting the ice from the roof so it was dripping down he wall and pulling the paint down. I went to an abandoned building across the road and found a bunch of materials and took off like 2 feet of snow on the roof and made a wall, a barrier of material [to keep the water from dripping down]. Oh my God, it was so cold. And I was using brushes, so I was getting water all over my hand. I had a winter jacket and winter boots.

In the end Kevin pushed through the cold and got the mural finished. He took some time to situate himself and figure out a work around for the snow and rain and was back at the wall in no time, finishing on the third day of painting and on schedule.

For this second project, Kevin was able to participate in the workshops with locals to get an idea about their thoughts, aspirations, and concerns about gender equality and what it means to them to work towards a more inclusive society. He had worked with kids before when teaching English abroad and with En Masse in schools doing workshops, but he said that this was a much more intimate and organic experience**.** At first, however, he said that there was some communication issues regarding his concept for the mural and hew felt that they were much more conservative in this smaller

Figure 4.3: *Change from the Inside*, Kevin Ledo, APTart Gender Equality project, Karak, Jordan Photo by Kevin Ledo (2015)

city than they were in Zarqa. Some of the women in the workshop did not want to touch on the topic of gender equality saying that things were fine as they were. Others said that they were tired of the seemingly endless rotation of NGOs coming in and going out of Jordan and other Middle Eastern countries starting up projects and leaving them either unfinished or open ended. They were reluctant at first to commit to the project and he sensed that there were some serious trust issues that needed to be addressed, so he just tried to be as honest as he could with them. He told them they were indeed funded by an NGO and that they would only be staying a week at most but that they wanted to make this as interactive as possible and that their input was essential to making this a successful project. Moreover, he expressed the need to take initiative to do projects combining art and social development rather than waiting for NGOs to impose their ideas and projects on them. Not just for art or social activism, but for general services and resources for their

communities. The theme of the workshop was inspired from the famous quote by Ghandi, 'Be the change that you wish to see in the world." Together they made a number of motivational and positive messages that they then included within the portrait of the young girl in the mural.

These were sentiments that had been building in Kevin since his trip to South America a couple of years before with his girlfriend. He witnessed people coming together in their communities, working to provide for each other and find alternatives to the severely limited resources and services in their townships. So for Kevin it was about making something collaborative *with* them rather than just *for* them and to help them think differently about how they could collectively work together to find solutions to the problems and challenges they face in their communities. If they were fed up with outside organizations and groups leaving things half done then they could organize themselves to continue or finish these open ended projects. Maybe they could even start some of their own. These young girls and boys coming together to share their ideas and hopes for a more inclusive and fair society and expressing them through a collaborative mural arts project was certainly a positive step in this direction. Ultimately, Kevin was able to articulate these ideas in the final production of the mural: the purity of the little girl's beaming expression of happiness and joy is immediately disarming. Like many of Kevin's portraits she gazes upwards, eyes full of life and hope, a bright and colorful reminder that these children are indeed the future of Al-Karak. If they are to make and effect change in the world they are yet to inherit then they need to know that their hopes and aspirations also have a place in that future and that they can be that change if they work hard and together for it.

Painting Outside the Lines

The following October, when Samantha from Aptart contacted Kevin to let him know that they were starting a mural project in Portland, Oregon, he was on board right away. A continuation their *Paint Outside The Lines Project,* Aptart's initiative in Portland was a response to the rise in fear mongering, racism, hate speech and crimes in the United States that has been fueled by the bigoted, misogynistic, and prejudiced rhetoric by the President. Previously, Aptart had organized mural projects under this project in 2014 in several refugee camps in Northern (Kurdistan) Iraq to help give Iraqi and Syrian youth a creative outlet and express themselves. Working with community organizations and groups in Portland in late 2016, Aptart brought in several artists to paint murals with the aim to celebrate diversity and work with immigrant and refugee youth groups. Originally they had intended to paint four murals in the downtown area and the Central Eastside Industrial District, however,

due to budgetary shortfalls and bureaucratic complications only two mural projects were completed, Kevin's and another by a Spanish street artist Ernesto Maranje.[211] Like their previous projects, artists and organizers held workshops with local youth to discuss their experiences with racism, Islamophobia, and intolerance in America and how they could generate a positive and hopeful message through street art muralism.

Kevin's mural, *Under the Same Sky (fig. 4.4)*, was sponsored by IRCO (Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization), a non-profit community organization which helps both established and arriving immigrants and refugees attain self-sufficiency in the Portland area. Portland has been a popular city for immigrant and refugee resettlement since the late 1970s, many of whom have been displaced due to war and conflict. Through IRCO's Refugee and Immigrant Student Empowerment (RISE) program, Kevin worked

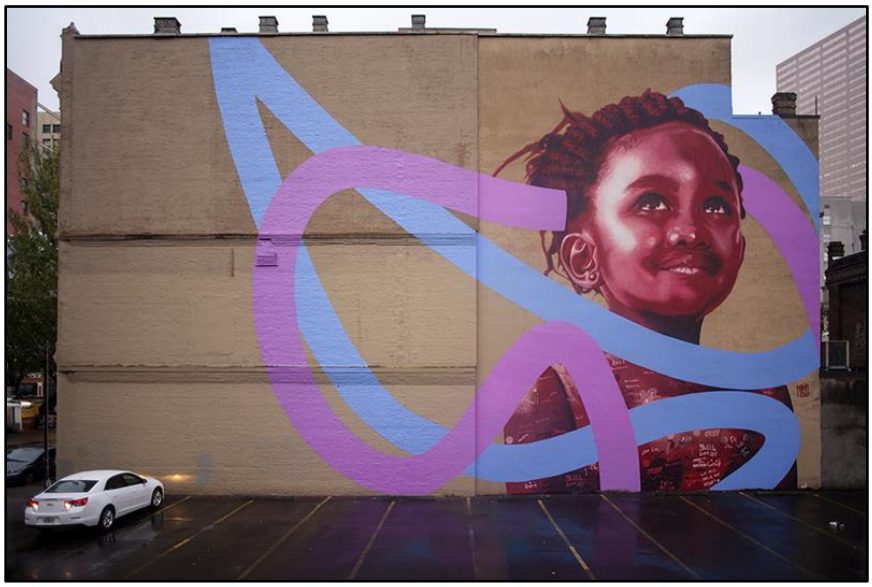

Figure 4.4: *Under the Same Sky*, Kevin Ledo, APTart Diversity project. Portland, Oregon. Photo by Samantha Robison (2016)

with local immigrant and refugee students from David Douglas High School to paint their ideas, hopes, and aspirations into his monumental five story mural (50 by 60 feet) in the downtown area of the city. David Douglas High School's Rise Program provides academic and social support for recently arrived immigrant and refugee students from grades 9 to 12 through tutors and conversational development clubs to assist them with their studies and "to help students practice English and build community."[212] Working closely with Kevin, high school youth used stencil cut outs to add their messages in a variety of languages –English, Arabic, Burmese, Somali, Swahili, and others –to fill in the bottom portion of the mural.

He said that he learned a great deal about refugees in Portland and that they were a very diverse group. The workshop was held at David Douglas High School and Kevin had the opportunity to talk and interact with the students to hear their stories and ideas for the project. He photographed some of them as potential candidates for the mural if they expressed interest in being the main subject. One of them was of a young girl wearing a hijab, a recent immigrant from Iraq, who seemed like an ambitious, charismatic, and outgoing child who Kevin thought was perfect for the mural. After all, Kevin's mural was meant to emphasize strength through diversity, particularly in the environment of islamophobia culturally being endorsed by the recent president elect, and he thought this image beautifully captured these elements. Sadly, the building owner refused his initial idea and sketch for the mural it and avoided providing any reason why. Kevin tried to push it but the building owner was irreconcilable on the issue and threatened to cancel the wall on him entirely. At first Kevin was upset and but after thinking about it realized that maybe painting her on the wall would make her, maybe even the building owner a target for hate crime.

> The property owner would be targeted for sure…I only thought about that after I was rejected…We had a lot of discussions about it afterwards and Sam[antha] said 'listen, the only way you make change is by getting your hands dirty, rustling some feathers. You can't always just be compliant.'

Kevin thought this was great advice but he was only in Portland for the week and was already running late into his schedule with this conflict of interest with the property owner so he decided to alter his original plan and used a stock image of a young Black girl instead. "I bought the rights…modified the image, made her look younger, and that's what I went with. I think it still had a really great effect." Being that the Black Lives Matter Movement is particularly strong in Portland, he thought that the image of a young and hopeful Black girl in the core of Downtown would be more acceptable for the property owner and resonate well with the downtown population. "There was even a march the day that I started," he said. Kevin's signature styled purple and blue banners wrap around her body and flow across the wall upwards, like her hopeful and future oriented gaze, into the sky. He said that the girl who had originally been selected for the mural was not informed about the reaction of the property owner and they decided that it was best to keep that to themselves. In the end, although he had to compromise his initial idea of, Kevin felt good to have done something for diversity and that he got to work with the local community again in the production of the mural as a collaborative project.

Facing the Future: War, Memory and Hope in Lebanon

Later that fall, Kevin went to Beirut to paint with AptArt again for their *Paint Outside the Lines Project*. Before the mural project was even off the ground, there were some conflicts of interest between Aptart organizers, Kevin, and the sponsoring government agency, which turned out to be the United Nations. "It's really hard for projects like that to get funding. They work with different organizations and sometimes one of them is the UN. But…they are really directive. They really will not let anybody do whatever they want. They have agendas."[213] They were offered funding but only if they worked with some youth in a drug awareness program and painted a mural according to their instructions, leaving little room for Kevin's creative input or any ideas from the youth group involved.

> They had done sketches and art…very typical of what you would expect from anti-drug imagery…They [had] the understanding that I was just going to paint what they wanted. They even asked me 'Are you going to paint our images?' I was like 'No, I'm going to take your underlying theme and I'm going to paint something based on that…I've heard what you said. I'll try to interpret it in a way.' Once we showed them the sketch, they all just pulled out…The people from the UN were like 'That's not what we asked for. There's no references to drugs up there.' Like, 'Do you really want me to paint syringes in somebody's neighborhood?'…They were just basically 'Either we're in control or it's not happening.'

Unfortunately the initial mural project that had been planned with support from the UN fell through, leaving Kevin without a wall to paint. "They work with local artists as well and so they blew a lot of their money in the beginning because of complications. So they were really hoping for that money." This was a disappointment but Kevin was thinking more about the youth that had got caught in between the conflict of interest between the two non-profit organizations. "I felt really bad for the kids because they would've been part of a great experience. They were going to be painting on the mural and being part of it and in the end they didn't get to do anything." He was only going to be able to stay in Beirut for 12 days so if they were going to paint a wall and do something for the local youth, they had better figure it out quick. "Samantha was just like 'Kevin we're going to do this no matter what so let's just do it. It's too bad we're not going to get any funding from them but we'll work something out.'"

Samantha made some calls and pulled some strings and ended up locating a wall in the Sin El-Fil neighborhood of the city on a residential building facing a parking lot. A local named Bassam helped them to find a wall and Samantha was able to use some of the organization's funding to rent a lift and purchase materials. They would have to make the money up somehow later on and Kevin

agreed to help raise funds through sales of prints of the mural at art events. “In the end we just worked with some local kids in the neighborhood and a lot of amazing things happened.”

The five story building that Kevin was to paint and the surrounding neighborhood of Sin El-Fil had seen heavy violence throughout the nearly twenty years of conflict across several wars in the region. The building still had visible traces of those conflicts – bullet and mortar holes –as did many buildings in the neighborhood, a physical reminder of the decades of battle between ethnic, religious, and political groups. It was also a reminder of the poor

Figure 4.5*: Facing the Future*, Kevin Ledo, Paint Outside the Lines, APTart project, Beirut, Lebanon. Photo by Samantha Robison (2016)

state of the economy and the priorities of the state, which included neither the maintenance of urban architecture and infrastructure nor improving the quality of life of its residents.

It was a standoff point between Syrian militia and the Lebanese army I believe. One of the front lines for a little bit. They kept pushing different parts of the city back and forth. Basically across the street was one side, the building I was painting was the other…You could see how the conflict played out...There are a lot of buildings with bullet holes around there.

When Kevin was preparing the wall he decided not to repair the bullet and mortar holes because he did not want the mural to cover up the past or hide it. Instead the mural would reframe these visible reminders of violence and conflict using them to build something celebrating life and the hope for a better tomorrow. “After speaking with some of the people in the neighborhood, I kind of got the sense that people didn’t want to be reminded of everything that they had lived through during the war. I really didn’t want to ignore it all

together, but wanted to kind of focus on what could come in the future." AptArt held a workshop with some of the locals, including residents and youth, in the area to get a better understanding of their connection to this past as well as the ins and outs of their daily lives, their hopes and aspirations. They asked them to write message for what they hoped for themselves or for their country. "There were so many conversations with the adults around and we asked the kids what they wished for the future. So we started finding out what was important to them. Even though there was still a lot intertwined there with war." Many of the children expressed their hopes for peace in Lebanon and an end to war while others were focused on the environment and the need to clean up the pollution and disrepair in the city.

Lebanon has taken in refugees from other wars over the years and many people within the country were displaced during its own civil war. The idea of the project was to bring together these different groups who may otherwise not have had the opportunity to interact, especially in such creative and positive circumstances. The project gave these kids the chance to relate to each other outside of ethnic or religious or citizenship based circumstances. It did not matter if they were Christian or Muslim, Lebanese or refugees from another country, they were just kids coming together to paint and express themselves.

One of the children that participated in the workshop was a seven year old local girl that Kevin thought would make a great subject for the mural. After speaking with and gaining permission from her parents he photographed her then used the portrait to design the mural on Photoshop back at his hotel room. The following day he got to work painting her portrait on the five story wall, highlighted with his signature ribbons and stars. "She lives between there and Miami…She speaks English, Portuguese, and Arabic I think. Even a little Chinese. She was a cool little girl, we had some fun." In the massive 50 by 70 foot high finished mural, *Facing the Future (fig. 4.5)*, she boldly looks upwards with determination, towards the future, focused and unafraid. Participating in the workshop and production of the mural with Kevin and AptArt showed her and the other youth that they can shape the world around them and that by working together they can make positive changes in their community. The strength and sense of purpose which radiates from her image also serves to inspire other youth in the neighborhood to face the future with a renewed sense of confidence and hope.

The RAW Project

Kevin's relationship with the RAW Project goes back to 2015, when he was invited to paint at an event called *Smashed Canvass* during Art Basel that year. It was organized by Robert de los Rios,

a well-connected local street art enthusiast and documenter who regularly put together activations and events in and around the arts district. While painting at the event –a collaborative mural with the Irish street artist Fin Dac –Kevin heard about the RAW Project at Jose de Diego Middle School (JDD) nearby. The RAW Project (Re-imagining Arts Wynwood) is a non-profit organization that helps to raise money to support struggling school arts programs and creatively inspire youth through the mural arts. The year before they had organized over 80 artists to paint murals at JDD Middle School coinciding with that year's Art Basel event in December. They were still finishing up the project so Kevin asked around to see if he could still get involved. As it turned out de los Rios was also one of the organizers but the roster had already been filled. They were set to start on a new project the following year at another school in the district and de los Rios said he would make sure that Kevin had a spot.

Students who have an artistic element to their education are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement. Primary and secondary schools which have active arts programs also report significantly higher attendance and lower dropout rates,

Figure 4.6: JDD Middle School with street art murals by Axel Void and Aholsniffglue. 2015.

particularly with lower SES students. These same students are also more than twice as likely to graduate from college as compared to students with no arts education.[214] Economic recession, budgetary cuts and restructuring over the last decade has resulted in cutbacks to arts programs, disproportionally affecting poorer and marginalized inner-city communities, leaving millions of American youth without access to quality arts education.[215]

RAW's pilot project at JDD Middle School developed out of the need for an active and dynamic arts program which could respond to

the needs of the students, inspire them to attend, improve attitudes, and help to reduce school violence through creative intervention.[216] Only about half of the school's 1500 student capacity, almost all of whom are African-American or Hispanic, were enrolled and daily attendance was consistently below the district average. The school was also ranked as one of the worst for violence in Florida in 2013-14 by the Florida Department of Education with 132 incidents of fighting, bullying, and battery.[217] That same year the school also ranked as one of highest in number of out of school suspensions.[218]

Every year, just a few blocks away, the entire district becomes the arts epicenter of the country for several weeks during Art Basel. As the mega arts event was being organized that year, millions of dollars were being invested into the annual spectacle while the administration at JDD was struggling to put funds together just to hire an arts instructor. A teacher at the school took the initiative to reach out to community arts associations hoping to organize a mural project for the students.[219] Robert de los Rios and Patrick Walsh, the director of the Wynwood Arts District Association (WADA), answered the call and met with the school's administrators in early 2014. Within a few months Walsh and de los Rios had put together a roster of international and local artists, and had secured support from local vendors –galleries, restaurants, and public organizations –for much needed materials, paints, and lifts.[220]

By the summer of 2016 the initial goal of $500,000 to complete the project and provide funding for an active arts program at the school was yet to be reached,[221] but the positive impacts of the mural project on the students and surrounding community were almost immediate. School attendance, enrollment, and test scores all saw significant increases. There was also almost a complete decrease in bullying and violence.[222] Students were beginning to take pride in their school again, proving that art can improve attitudes and encourage positive relations, bettering student life and the school environment. As well, a number of the participating artists held in-class workshops and involved students in the painting of their murals which had a lasting impact in terms of their sense of civic ownership for the art, their school, and their community. The success of the RAW Project at JDD Middle School has expanded the conversation about the role of arts in education, particularly the positive outcomes on attendance and the reduction of violence among the students, but also in how the streets based arts can help children to express themselves creatively and constructively explore alternative ideas or perspectives.

Kevin returned to Wynwood Miami in November 2016 to paint for RAW's new project at the Eneida M. Hartner Elementary located on the fringes of the district, just a few blocks away from JDD Middle School.[223] The elementary was also severely underfunded

and unable to support a full time arts program for its students. Robert de los Rios was hoping that they could reproduce the success they had at JDD Middle School by bringing in local and international artists during Art Basel to paint murals, hold workshops, and auction off donated art to help the school achieve its funding goals.

Kevin's mural, *Tribute to Standing Rock (fig. 4.7)*, took up the entire corner of the entrance wall area, measuring 22 feet high by 35 feet across. The main subject would be a portrait of an indigenous protestor, a tribute to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe as they and other indigenous groups valiantly protested against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The intended pipeline project would pass over ancestral lands, potentially threatening contaminate he water and environment in the region. By December of 2016 the protests had been ongoing for almost two years with thousands of indigenous and non-indigenous activists and demonstrators clashing with corporate, state, and federal authorities. The North Dakota pipeline had become a national conversation, especially with President Trump putting his full support behind Keystone project. Kevin was among a number of graffiti and street artists that year in Wynwood who had dedicated their work to raising awareness about the pipeline and the protests.[224]

In following the theme he had been running with his murals that past year, the side bust of the indigenous protestor was encapsulated

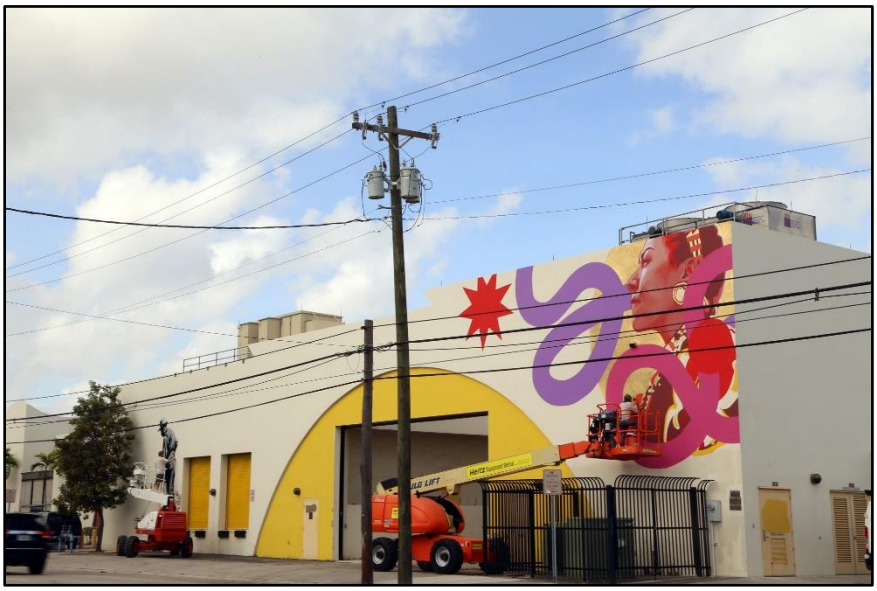

Figure 4.7: *Tribute to Standing Rock* Kevin Ledo, E.M. Hartner Elementary, Wynwood, Miami. Photo by Kris Murray (2016).

in gold leaf and surrounded by vectored lines and shapes in pink and purple. In the Miami sun helped to create a spectacular aura around the pipeline protestor as it reflected off the leaf that Kevin painstakingly applied, piece by piece, over the course of several days. Clad in traditional indigenous dress, she stares proudly

upwards with focused determination, a shining symbol of strength, spirit, and hope.

He said that painting for the RAW project in Wynwood alongside other internationally known artists like Mr June, Paola Delfin, Case Macclaim Pip Sqeak, Axel Void, Bik Ismo, Fin Dac, Pixel Poncho, and D*Face was a little surreal for him. Moreover, de los Rios had given him a spot in the front which meant that his work would be seen by students and visitors entering the school every day. It also turned out that he would be sharing that corner wall with none other than Sheppard Fairey, which for Kevin was a pretty big deal. In a short few years he had gone from doing small walls and jams to monumental walls on bigger projects with some major names in the arts community. By early December 2016 there were about 40 artists working on murals at the school. Many had come through to paint in the weeks leading up to and then during Art Basel that year. That number would increase to about 80 artists over the following months as artists continued to sign up and donate their time, creativity, and art to beautifying the school and working with the kids. While local artists painted whenever they could be fit in to the schedule, most international artists came in on their own budget and took time to contribute to the project after they had finished their Basel work.

Although funding the project continued to be a challenge and they were yet to hit their goals, RAW at E.M. Hartner was also successful in improving the general attitudes and attendance of the students. More were showing interest in the arts, passing time in the courtyard while the artists painted, either watching them work or practicing their own drawing and coloring. Overall, students were taking greater pride in their school, spending more time on school grounds regardless if they had class or not. Some students also got to help work on the murals with the artists, assisting them with materials, mixing paints, cleaning brushes, and filling in sections of the backgrounds. Kevin was not able to involve the kids in his project as his was up on a boom lift most days in the hot sun and his painting schedule did not allow for him to be more involved in the workshops. Still, he was glad to be contributing his art to this important community project.

The RAW Project would go on to paint two more schools in Wynwood and then would expand its operation into other states. In 2017-18 several elementary schools –Cowell, Eagleton and Fairview –were selected for mural projects in the city of Denver. Like in Wynwood, the project coincided with the annual mural arts festival called Crush which is held in the RiNo (River North) Arts District. This allowed RAW organizers to poach artists from the festival lineup, connect with the local arts scene, and combine them with their already existent roster of artists that they were bringing in from the previous projects in Miami. As well, a number of artists

were already painting at Crush in some capacity, officially for the festival or on the side, so travel costs were significantly reduced. Having the RAW project coincide with a major arts festival once again helped organizers save on logistical expenses, allowing them to put more into the actual project than into the organization and set up which tends to be costly.

The costs to the RAW Project are mitigated by the volunteer structure of the organization. In fact, Kevin mentioned that RAW is completely run by volunteers, even all the organizers are volunteers. Not a single member takes a paycheck for their tireless work in making the project a success. Donations from local businesses like restaurants and equipment rental companies also make a difference. For the Denver project, the organizers and artists were all fed donated food from local restaurants the whole time they were there. A couple of the bar restaurants even held a wrap party for the artists and organizers after the project was finished to show their appreciation. The city of Denver also helped to fund their project and a local company donated a fleet of fifteen lifts. He says that there has been a great deal of love and support from the local communities and businesses. They were all so happy to have them there and wanted to show their gratitude. Kevin felt that it was a genuine appreciation and they wanted to be a part of it. He said that the money coming into the city and state from marijuana legalization had been substantial so they are looking to reinvest it into the community to improve the quality of life for Denver residents rather than cash in on the urban cool of street art for a tourism boost. Still, he mentioned that the city was starting to blow up and that they had certainly embraced street art as a branding opportunity, "There is just a lot happening…obviously developers want to raise property values in certain places and…that city is full of murals. Like, more than Montreal. There are murals everywhere in that city."

Kevin was invited to paint a mural for Eagleton Elementary in September 2017, which was woefully underfunded like the schools in Miami. According to Kevin, the students were mostly, "disadvantaged youth, minorities….like, 80% (with) single parents, living under the poverty line." He said that there were about thirty artists involved in two or three waves at all the schools. Titled, *Rise Above (fig. 4.8)*, his was meant to coincide with and raise awareness about the Trump administration's rescinding of the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) that very same month.[225] Approximately 800,000 American residents identify as Dreamers, including 17000 Coloradans, who are protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) legislation put forward by the Obama administration in 2012. "A lot of these kids fall under that category. And so there was a lot of push from the principals and everybody involved to address

that." Kevin felt that he was able to do so effectively by painting the portrait of a girl he photographed in Jordan a couple of years back when he was working with Aptart.

> I really had a specific idea of rising above and she just really depicted that look and that expression in one of the photos so I used that…she could look like a lot of things so it kind of could be identifiable, someone could see themselves in it…So because they are being directly affected by that Dreamer legislation and…all the rhetoric that has been coming from it, I just wanted to have something to kind of encourage kids to…get past it, that they'll rise above any kind of discrimination, or any bad or horrible language that is coming through media or politics. That they are better than that.

After the Denver project wrapped up the RAW team returned to Miami to start another project at the Earlington Heights Elementary School. Kevin would collaborate with street artist Paola Delfin to paint an untitled mural in December of that year on the exterior of the school. The following year he returned to Denver to paint another mural in collaboration with Fin Dac titled Future Positive, at the Cheltenham Elementary School. The last mural that I heard that Kevin had painted for the RAW Project was back at the E.M. Hartner Elementary School in December of 2019. The school had requested that the walls be redone because of necessary construction renovations, so artists were invited back to paint again. Most artists

Figure 4.8: *Rise Above*, Kevin Ledo, Raw Project. Denver, CO, USA. Photo by Kevin Ledo (2016)

who returned to paint again were offered their original spots so Kevin repainted the same corner on the entrance way next to Sheppard Fairey, this time choosing to paint a fellow street artist and activist he admires named Nate Dee.

The positive impact of the RAW Project on these schools in Miami and Denver is clearly evident in the reactions by the students, staff, and surrounding communities. The improved conditions and attitudes of the students, however, appeared to be dependent on the active status of the project at the schools. According to the statistics gathered by the Florida Department of Education, by 2017-18 fighting had gone back up at JDD Middle School again and both JDD and E.M. Hartner Elementary schools saw absences rise again.[226] This is suggestive that these schools have benefitted the most while the RAW Project artists were actively painting at the schools and holding workshops with the students. Participating with the artists and engaging with them through the workshops and classes had the most positive effects on these students' attitudes and behaviors. When the artists finished and the RAW Project moved on to another school, the students were no longer in regular contact with the artists, did not see them painting. As well, younger students starting at the school in the years following, who never met or saw the artists or benefitted from their presence or activities, were more prone to fighting and bullying others. De Los Rios mentioned in a 2016 interview that "It's not about leaving a legacy…It's about giving these kids the options they should already have. How do you know if a kid wants to be an artist, or a musician, or an athlete, unless you expose them to it? The benefit will always be the option."[227] Certainly ensuring that these youth have a greater range of opportunities and choices to pursue their interests in the arts is a noble cause. Giving these kids a chance to explore their creativity in a positive and uplifting environment and helping to reignite their interest in school are all good things, but contrary to what de los Rios has said, maybe it really is about creating a legacy here, one which puts arts education to the forefront and continues to grow the project that RAW started.

Even though de los Rios seemed to be against the that idea and more about raising awareness to what the kids are lacking, they could go a step further and enact a legacy program at these schools. WADA and de los Rios could extend their networks to these schools, so that they could keep in contract with the artists and organizations, the staff could be trained on how to organize a mural project, how to contact artists or organizations to set up art classes or workshops moving forward and maintain their own murals. De los Rios and WADA would be network extenders, bringing the schools into their networks so that they could set up street and graffiti and even traditional muralists to come in and teach and interact with students and paint murals to keep the participation going, especially for new kids who have not had the opportunity to benefit from it. This would help to impart their knowledge and repertoires of practice to the school and community thereby creating a more sustainable project

and ensures that the kids continue to benefit from active arts projects in the school. Ultimately the purview of this research did not involve a deeper analysis of the effectiveness of these projects on the long run, however, this could be an area worth further attention for arts educators and social sciences interested in the pedagogical value of graffiti and street art in primary and secondary school environments.

Strength and Power: Reclaiming Indigenous Expression in Street Art Muralism

The E.M. Hartner mural was also a moment of reflexive introspection and development for Kevin. Indeed all mural projects, especially those involving a social or political element or theme, demand some level of introspection or self-examination, but this mural was a unique moment which forced Kevin to think about intentionality in his work. In his choice to use the image of the protestor as a reference for his mural in Wynwood that year, Kevin did not think that it was an issue being that the image was of a random protestor from a newspaper article. He would learn later on that the image was in fact, an indigenous dancer, educator and choreographer named Miss Chief Rocka, whose real name is Angela Miracle Gladue. Miss Chief Rocka lives in Edmonton Alberta and is a member of the Papaschase and Frog Lake First Nation. She has been using dance as a form of education and mentorship for over 15 years in indigenous communities, youth centers, outreach programs and conferences. She also tours as a dancer with the indigenous Canadian electronic music group, A Tribe Called Red, who blend hip hop, reggae, and dubstep with elements of First Nations vocal chanting and drumming.[228] Miss Chief Rocka's image had been captured by a photographer named J. Martin while she attended a rally in Washington D.C. in 2016 in solidarity with the Dakota Pipeline protestors in North Dakota. When Kevin found out who it was and that he had in fact used her image without consent, he felt that he had done her and the photographer a disservice. It weighed heavy on his conscience and he wanted to make it right. "I don't think that there are any other pieces that I've done where I'm thinking about it still…I can't help but feel that maybe I'm not in any position to be saying anything…like 'I know what's right and I'm going to show you.' I fear [that's] what I had done in Miami." He does his best to approach his work as transparently and collaboratively as possible so realizing that he had used her image without fully receiving her permission or doing greater diligence in researching the subject left him particularly troubled. The last thing he wanted to do was misappropriate her image and indigeneity in his work

A few months later Kevin went to a concert featuring A Tribe Called Red and had the opportunity to meet the group backstage

after the show, where he also got to meet Miss Chief Rocka in person. “I apologized to her when I approached her but…one of the first things that came out of my mouth was ‘you know I had really great intentions’ and then I was just like, of course, and I was just like [putting his hands in his face, disappointed in himself].” Now Kevin felt his apology was falling flat, but to his surprise she was not upset with him and appreciated his humility and honesty in apologizing to her and admitting his shortcoming with the use of her image in the mural. Instead of focusing on any negative, she took Kevin’s gesture as part of the solution rather than part of the problem, “She responded [well] and that really stuck with me.” Kevin would later post to social media his mistake of using her image without consent, and redirected traffic to Miss Chief Rocka’s work and those directly involved in the protests. “That’s why I wrote it and why decided to go public and explain. Even when you think you’re the best it’s just not good enough. Yes it’s not always going to be super easy, it’s not going to be black and white. You’re going to have to figure it out.”

Both kept in touch after meeting at the concert through email and social media contact. In 2018 Kevin was invited to paint at the Beltline Mural Project (BUMP) in Calgary, Alberta that August. He took this opportunity to reach out to Miss Chief Rocka to see if she would be interested in being the subject for his mural that year. She agreed and provided an image of her in full traditional dress taken by the Calgary photographer Candice Wardof.[229] This massive mural (approximately 50 by 120 feet) was painted on the outside of the five storey Calgary City Centre Parkade and was titled ᓃᐦᑳᑎᓯᐏᐣ, which translates to *Strength and Power in Cree (fig. 4.9)*. Miss Chief Rocka’s monumental portrait takes up roughly half of the mural space as she proudly gazes forward with her arms outstretched surrounded by vectored lines and orbs.

BUMP is a mural festival which started in 2017 managed and operated by the Beltline Neighbourhoods Association (BNA) across the Connaught, Victoria Park and Stampede neighborhoods of the city. What makes BUMP unique is that the is a non-profit, grass-roots community organization founded and managed by local residents rather than a collection of property owners and commercial interests like with BIAs or BIDs. Bringing together commercial and government stakeholders in the Beltline to support and fund the fledgling arts festival each year, the BNA tries to balance these interests as best as possible responding to the needs of the community both socially and commercially. Still, the BNA needs financial and logistical support in order to produce the arts festival each year which mainly comes from municipal and private funding. Like other mural arts festivals across North America, BUMP is built around mural productions by local and international artists, as well

as DJ and music venues, artist talks, mural tours, street jams, art installations and exhibitions. Municipal support comes in the way of funding and space allowances in the Beltline while local business sponsors such as Toronto-Dominion Bank, Telus, and the real estate development firm Qualex-Landmark, among others, provide funding for materials, equipment, and transport needs.

For Miss Chief Rocka, dance is an integral part of her identity as a Cree woman and an important medium by which she is able to

Figure 4.9: *ᓴᐦᑲᑎᓯᐏᐣ / Sôhkâtisiwin / Strength; Power*, Kevin Ledo. Calgary, Canada, BUMP Festival. Photo by Lee Nordbye (2018)

transmit traditional values and instill a sense of pride in those she works with in indigenous communities. As a pure expression of her indigeneity, her dancing is also a way of reclaiming that historical and cultural identity from the generations of systemic racism and oppression by the state:

> My dance is a political expression, because it wasn't that long ago that our dances were outlawed, that our culture was outlawed. Being indigenous was illegal. So to me it's really important that I represent these dances outward, and in the world, on stages, and in spaces where we were once not welcomed, but now having a platform where people like A Tribe Called Red are really expressing our culture in a good way, I feel honored to be a part of that. In that way it is a political expression because we are still here, and it is a huge honor to be able to share that with the people.[230]

In a similar fashion, the celebration of indigeneity through street art is a way to reclaim indigenous representation outside of mainstream media which has for years either under or misrepresented or all together ignored indigenous voices and visions and culture. Kevin's mural and his collaboration with Miss Chief Rocka is also political in its positive, uplifting, and strong characterization of an indigenous

woman shining light on her activism and contributions to indigenous culture in North America. The positive expression of indigeneity through street art can help to reframe the indigenous body and spirit –both male and female –celebrating them as strong, proud, dignified, and respected rather than as vagrants, victims, or criminals, as they have been historically in the media.

When street artists come from indigenous backgrounds the issue of reclaiming indigenous representation is even more significant,

Figure 4.10: *Untitled*, Kalum Teke Dan. BUMP Festival. Photo by Tracy Luc-German (2018).

especially in terms of being a counter-hegemonic expression. The powerful mural of a singing Blackfoot man painted by the indigenous artist Kalum Teke Dan for BUMP that same year is an excellent example of this counter hegemonic expression through street art *(fig. 4.10).* It is also an example of how street art mural projects can act as nodes of intersection for social and community organizations and indigenous populations. The mural was painted in collaboration with *Colouring It Forward*, a social organization that promotes indigenous education, healing and reconciliation through art. Kalum's mural depicts a traditionally dressed man of the Blackfoot Tribe singing in a mountainous setting next to a raging river. Although not as large as the mural painted by Kevin, Kalum's mural stands two storeys high and is approximately forty feet long, filling the entirety of the back wall of the 17th Avenue framing commercial establishment it is painted on.

Collaborations between indigenous and non-indigenous artists are also equally important as they can help to promote creative and positive relationships between artists and activists. Collaborative mural projects can also inculcate stronger and more positive representations of indigeneity in society as well as promote interest

in indigenous arts, history, and culture. Ultimately the presence and accessibility of large-scale indigenous public art by or in collaboration with indigenous artists can also have an inspirational effect on others to pursue creative and artistic outlets which will help to grow a greater appreciation for indigeneity in society more generally.

Doing more with art

Around the same time that Kevin was getting involved with RAW and Aptart, Jason Botkin was solidifying his intentions to pursue more environmentally themed mural work and arts activations. Although Jason was a more professionally established artist who had been organizing his-own mural arts projects through En Masse for several years, even he was still sort of figuring out how he could use art more meaningfully. He realized that he could not always do socially engaged art as he needed to pay his bills and make a living somehow. “Sometimes it’s not a choice, sometimes were stuck in a place where we have to make money. Half my year, over these last years, has been volunteer based...the other half is dedicated to hanging out with my kids, as much as humanly possible, and working (hard) to make money where I could.” So even with his experience in managing En Masse and organizing shows and events he was also still figuring out how to balance his professional and activist work so that he could make more of an impact with his art and speak to important issues.

Jason had always had social and political interests and had explored some of these themes in his work throughout the years. His work as an organizer and arts director had provided him a unique position to sort out his thoughts about his professional and activist work more directly than Kevin during this time. After his involvement with LNDMRK in the start-up and success of Montreal’s Mural Festival in 2013, he had been thinking about the impact that graffiti and street art were having in communities, and how they could be used more positively and effectively, “I think it’s where we need to challenge ourselves. It not just graffiti arts, but street arts as well…are we playing into that culture of rampant individualism or are we actually talking about these things as the tools that they are designed for? To really creatively impinge on the world around you.”

When Jason was in Wynwood painting for Art Basel around 2011 he met Carmen Zella, the principal director of Now Art, a Los Angeles based international public art agency which consults, curates and produces temporary and permanent art work installations and exhibitions, and mural activations. At the time Carmen was working with the Do Art Foundation, a non-profit organization committed to using art to revitalize communities physically and

socially. She had been discussing her recent trip to Egypt and work there with youth graffiti writers. Apparently Egyptian youth were offended by the idea of their graffiti as being related to western ideas of graffiti writing: "They were like, 'we're not fucking graffiti artists. We're not writing our fake names and shit like that. This is part of our traditions, historically, culturally, for thousands of years.' Very politicized words, super politicized." He says that there was a public cleanup crew that came by one of the walls that they had painted their slogans on, to buff and clean it. Some protestors got in their way and told them that they could not erase what was on the wall because they endorsed the work and the message it contained. Carmen had explained that the situation escalated and the police or military were called to the scene ending with these youth protestors being executed by firing squad against a wall for trying to protect their right to keep the graffiti there.[231] Jason said that learning about this and talking with Carmen about it left him:

> Stunned. It was like A) would I die for somebody else's work? They didn't know who it was. Like, '*No. This is our message. This is our voice, and it's on the wall and we protect it. You can't take it down.*' B) Am I making work [art] that other people would die for or that I would die for? And if you're not…maybe people aren't dying in the streets but…they're just disposable people. Human fodder that they just throw away pretty much. Wars are happening all over the world with people dying constantly and we sit back and are like '*This looks good! Yeah that's my name! There's another goopy character! Me, me, me, me, me!'* Meanwhile, an American child, a Canadian child, your child, my child, has 800 times the carbon footprint of kid born in Indonesia. And we're telling people in Indonesia, people around the world to stop having kids? We're looking at the wrong people. It's unbelievable. So for me, after that conversation I just stopped being interested in any commitment (to producing just to get up).

Jason's attitude towards graffiti writing culture was already pretty jaded given the repeated occurrences of bombers targeting his work and that of other street artists. Learning about youth in Egypt and other countries in the Middle East fighting oppression with political graffiti and in some cases being persecuted for it or killed, and then others dying to preserve their messages really hit home for him at that point. There he was, in the middle of Art Basel, the biggest art event in North America, where countless graffiti and street art murals are painted every year, high end exhibits and auctions sell pieces of art for thousands of dollars, and artistic production is spectacularized for consumption and entertainment, while kids were being shot half a world away simply for expressing their wanton for a better world. It did not sit well with him and he was really starting to think more critically about how his art and work could put it to better use:

> It's not that I'm not productive, I'm getting tons and tons of work done. It's just I'm literally stepping back from it…and reading articles…and saying 'What am I doing with my art?' I want to make an impact in my community and my

community is the mural festival dudes. I grew up with these guys in the sense that …we were merging into our art at the same time.

He says that Mural Festival, although successful, has not embraced its platform to address social, cultural, political, or environmental issues more fully. “Mural festival? Let’s talk about the homeless people, let’s talk about the sandwich you got down the street…Use the platform to speak to the community, its needs and wants. And the corporations (that) have money to give to that type of shit…will not be able to control it all.”

The Holbox Experience

In February of 2014, Jason would get that opportunity to create something more impactful when he received an invitation to paint in Holbox Island, Mexico for the Festival International Arts Public/International Public Arts Festival (FIAP/IPAF). A fellow artist and friend, Ruben Cassasco, who was also one of the organizers, thought that Jason and a couple other local Montreal artists (Omen and Labrona) would make good additions to the inaugural event. Local property and shop owners sponsored the festival, and all paint supplies were donated by the Mexican graffiti and street art mural organization Nueve Arte Urbano (NAU). Besides the opportunity to visit Mexico and paint, what interested Jason was the inclusive and collaborative approach that the festival organizers were taking to ensure that the local community was involved and represented as best possible by the visiting artists.

Although the festival was meant to beautify Holbox and boost its tourism appeal, he said that the organizers were also making efforts to connect with the locals by having the artists meet and stay with some of the families and people of the community.

They flew us out to this island early and hooked us up with families and individuals there, which is predominantly a fishing community, quite impoverished in fact. Our mission was to talk to these people, get to know them, eat food with them. If you’re lucky make a friend for life. Then from that experience, come up with something artistic. We were told to arrive with no preconceived ideas of content or message, and that was (all) supposed to be formulated through that (shared experience).

Still, the festival’s mandate seemed to be in contradiction with the message many of the artists were incorporating into their work, namely to #saveholbox. Holbox was quickly turning into a tourist destination which meant that there were some major economic and infrastructural changes taking place as well as new developments on the horizon. The fast pace at which these changes were occurring meant that the biodiversity of the region, including the habitats of many animals, such as the coastal waters for shark populations and sea turtle nesting grounds, could be put at risk. Furthermore, the

culture and livelihoods of the local traditional fishing communities were also threatened by the transition into a more tourism dominated economy.

Well aware of this paradox, Jason was still committed to the project and felt that the collaborative approach of being embedded with the locals, and incorporating their experiences into their murals was a step towards producing more inclusive and representative public art. It may not have been the best scenario, but it was a compromise he was willing to take and one which would give him the opportunity to apply his art more responsively.

He met and stayed with a local family, ate food with them and heard their stories, sharing some of his with them as well. During this time he also had the opportunity to explore the streets and shops of Holbox and mingle with the locals to gain a greater appreciation for their public culture before getting down to painting for the festival. Murals were painted on walls in the downtown area and along the main boulevard of the beach as well as large, half-domed acoustic shell structures where musicians and music performances are regularly held during local festivals and celebrations. Jason collaborated with the Mexican street artist Curiot, whom he had met

Figure 4.11: *Untitled*, Jason Botkin & Curiot. Festival International Arts Public/International Public Arts Festival (FIAP/IPAF), Holvbox, Mexico. 2014.

for the first time on this trip, to paint one of the acoustic shells in the central square of the city, several blocks from the beach. Although Jason and Curiot had never painted together before, the similarity of their styles worked well for the project. The dome featured a variety of patterns and psychedelic characters in deeply saturated colors (lime, aqua, and teal greens, orchid and violet purples, lapis and azure and sapphire blues), local flowers (dahlia's, lilies, morning glories, and marigolds), Mesoamerican glyphs (Maya, Aztec, and

Mexica), shells, tubers, fish, and snakes, outreaching hands, and other cultural or folkloric elements such as a ceremonial leopard and animal masks, among other colorful shapes and characters *(fig. 4.11)*.

At one point Jason met a managing director of Juxtapose Magazine in Latin America, and while they were having drinks and she asked him, "'Do you know Tre who runs Pangea Seed foundation?' I didn't know that guy, but he sounded cool, and they knew him through another project and wanted very much to introduce me." Pangea Seed Foundation is an international non-profit organization combining art and environmentalism to promote the preservation and protection of the world's oceans. With a focus on science, education, and *artivism* –the intersection of art and activism –they aim to raise awareness and empower communities to develop creative solutions to protect and preserve ocean environments. They met up later that evening and Tre ended up inviting Jason to participate in another project they were working on nearby in Cancun. There were no walls left for him to paint so he was set up with fellow Canadian street artist Jeremy Shantz to build and paint a series of large, movable, comical, mask pieces with reconfigurable features that people could rearrange like a psychedelic Mr. Potato Head. The two artists also collaborated on several smaller wall spaces in Cancun that were not officially on the official ticket but still carried the cultural thematic of the festival. He also took the time to talk with Tre and other organizers about Pangea Seed and their Sea Walls project. *Sea Walls: Artists for Oceans*, is Pangea Seed's ongoing public mural arts program which collaborates with artists across the globe to produce arts activations brining attention to water-based environmental and climate change issues. The program emphasizes the importance of ecological sustainability through the creation and production of dynamic, imaginative, and inspiring works of public art which not only draw attention to water related issues but affectively reaffirm our connection to the beauty and wonder of nature and ocean life.[232] "Really quickly I got involved with him because it was obvious that not only did I have the capacity as a muralist to perform and create works of interest, I also knew how to organize community, how to organize the group, where they were kind of struggling administratively to keep up with things." Jason had gained a great deal of experience and knowledge over the years building and co-managing En Masse that he saw as an opportunity to help impart upon the organizers for their Sea Wall events. "I've seen the En Masse Project and its impact in Montreal, I've seen the Mural Festival, and I've seen what's happened."

He was excited to be getting involved with an organization where he could focus his creative energies towards projects which were oriented along more meaningful and activist themes, like cultural and environmental conservation. This type of creative activism was something he felt was lacking more generally in the street art community. One of the main things that interested him about Pangea Seed was that one of their goals was to make artists ambassadors for environmental issues. He thought that this ambassadorship was important to helping artists "think of themselves as having the right to speak to those issues." He kept in touch with Pangea Seed continuing to build his relationship with them over the following months by email and social media, getting more deeply involved with their murals for oceans and the environment program.

Figure 4.12: *Protect What You Love*, Jason Botkin. Sea Walls: Cozumel. Cozumel, Mexico. Photo by Jason Botkin (2015).

What emerged from the Holbox experience...was a series of interconnections [that] really exemplified how a community comes together to co-manage its shared resources. In this case were talking about creativity, specifically with the thematic charge or exploring environmental issues.

He was starting to understand how his art could be a way to inspire and encourage others to envision a better, more inclusive, and sustainable future.

Street Art Environmentalism

In 2015 Jason began working with Pangea Seed Foundation beginning with two murals for the Sea Walls mural arts program that summer. His first mural, *Protect What You Love (fig. 4.12),* was a tribute to the French oceanic explorer, conservationist, and filmmaker Jacques Cousteau for the Cozumel, Mexico event in July. Spanning over 40 feet and two storey's in height, the mural depicted a deep blue colored portrait of Cousteau amid splashing waves of vibrant pinks, greens, and more blues jumping from the wall onto the street. Jason chose to paint Cousteau for his lifelong efforts to conserve ocean environments and educate the public through film and documentary work. His second Sea Walls mural project was in Miami during Art Basel that December *(fig. 4.13)*. *The Long Swim*,

painted on a second story landing in central Wynwood, depicted a swimming polar bear against a charged backdrop of energy and earth exploding from beneath it. The focus of this mural was climate change and damaging effects that high CO2 levels in the atmosphere to ocean habitats of animals like the polar bear that are being driven into extinction. Jason also wanted to raise awareness about the human impact of unchecked energy consumption and pollution

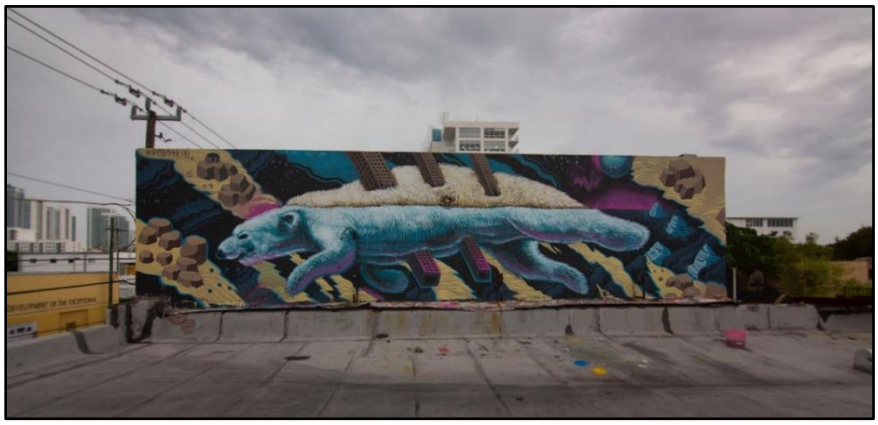

Figure 4.13: *The Long Swim*, Jason Botkin. Sea Walls: Miami. Photo by Nate Peracciny (2015)

which have contributed to global warming changing the chemistry to ocean environments in ways which have threatened countless other species.

In March of 2016 Jason painted for Sea Walls: Napier, New Zealand along with 30 other local and international artists to raise awareness of water based environmental issues such as climate change, over-fishing, plastics pollution, and habitat loss. [233] Prior to the festival, the traditional Maori ritual ceremony of encounter, *pōwhiri*, was performed to welcome the organizers and artists. This was significant in that it acknowledged the importance of cooperative relationships in meeting the challenges of conserving and protecting the oceans and environment. The Napier City Council also contributed $30,000 to help fund the festival while local businesses and organizations provided food, equipment, scaffolding, lifts, and paint.[234] A total of 29 murals were painted over a 10 day period across the Napier Central Business District and the suburb of Ahuriri. Jason and fellow street artist Cinzah Merkins combined their talents to produce a massive mural focusing on the importance of preserving protected marine environments on the National Aquarium of New Zealand facing Hawke Bay. An astounding 427 feet (130 meters) long, it incorporated mythological elements and large ocean creatures such as an octopus covered in traditional Māori face markings (Tā Moko), the longfin eel, crayfish, snapper fish, the white-faced heron, and coral reefs *(fig. 4.14)*.

Figure 4.14: *Untitled*, Jason Botkin & Cinzah Merkins. Sea Walls: Napier, New Zealand. Photo by Tre' Packard (2016)

Art of Compromise

Returning to Montreal in June, Jason was approached by the SDBSL to do a series of ten sidewalk pieces for the 2016 edition of Mural Festival. His initial idea for the theme of the series, a focus on homelessness, a pervasive and growing issue in the city and the Plateau area, was rejected by the business development organization on the basis that it was not the tone they were looking for and that it would not contribute to the revitalization of the district. Instead they wanted him to paint a series of pleasing figures along his more psychedelic line of work, fantastic and playful characters, and not something so serious. "They wanted flowers and pretty things," he said cringingly. At first he stood his ground and argued against their censoring of what he thought was an important topic that was not given enough attention. The SDBSL threatened to drop him entirely so he decided to take the offer and instead of painting homeless figures, he used the opportunity to make homelessness a topic of conversation when people stopped to talk to him about his work.

Although the organizers of Mural Festival, LNDMRK, have been open to socially, politically, or environmentally conscious art, they have preferred that the it remain subtle or toned down so as to not to offend property owners or their sponsors. Jason says that this is a topic that he regularly brought up to them over the past several years but that the issue is not necessarily that they are against the inclusion of more directed or meaningful content, rather it may have more to do with an overly bureaucratized management structure and pressure from sponsors to keep the event non-controversial.

I've talked to the guys extensively about this and it doesn't fall on deaf ears. But you have some many people organizing the thing…each of the administrators sees

it differently. I don't think that they really capitalized on the tool that they have. I think it's just, it's just my opinion. I think what they have built, very successfully, was built on the model of Miami. Which is a rather contentless, very beautiful party. Very exciting, dynamic, but they're not saying (anything). Some of the walls are, but that essentially is a celebration of creativity. Which is good, I'll buy that. That's good enough for me. But what I'm talking about is that you're in an area, in a district, on St. Laurent, in the Plateau and there's very specific needs and issues happening inside that community and instead of just posting daily images of murals from around the world, post shit about that community and what's going in. Walk up the street, walk a few fucking steps and there's (a) homeless (person).

Painting on the sidewalk provided a different context than if he was painting on the wall where most, if not all, street art is typically done. He said that being immersed in the crowd made him more approachable and he felt that people were more encouraged to talk to him as he was in their path on the streets. Typically he would have his back to the crowd as he faced the wall which he says does not always encourage people to approach and talk to him about his work. He says that he had lots of interesting conversations with people, more than he would have had had he been on the wall and he took the opportunity to discuss important things like homelessness and water related environmental issues. He also painted several aquatic creatures that he had recently featured in his Sea Walls murals, such as the octopus, red snapper fish, and some of his signature waves. When the media came by to talk to him about his work and promote the festival he also took the opportunity to talk about how his original ideas were censored by the SDBSL and their insistence on less provocative or shocking imagery.[235] Apparently after receiving some blow back for censoring Jason's creativity and voice, the SDBSL told him that following year he could do whatever he wanted. Jason says that it is hard to fight for rights or raise awareness from within the system, especially when a sponsoring agency holds most of the cards and funding, but depending on how you approach the situation, you can make it work and still be able to have a voice.

A Love Letter to the Great Lakes

Having now participated in several Pangea Seed events by this point, Jason had had the opportunity to see how the organization operated and shared in some of its successes. In June of 2016 he was named the regional artistic director for Canada by Pangea Seed and helped to co-produce a Sea Walls event, *A Love Letter to the Great Lakes,* in Toronto, Ontario. This festival brought 23 graffiti and street artists (11 local and 10 international) to paint 23 permanent murals in the city.[236] The 3 participating artists from Mexico –Sens, Valinas, and Sermob –came with additional sponsorship from Nueve Arte Urbano, who provided all the paint for the event once more. In fact, they provided so much paint that Jason said that there was enough left over to support mural projects in the city for two years

following. "He sent up *so much* paint. We had so much extra that for years something like half the walls being painted were that paint." Edgar Sanchez, one of the co-founders of Nueve Arte Urbano, had also come up to Canada for the festival, which was the first international mural festival that they had sponsored outside of Mexico. It was his paint company, Incusa, which had donated the paint for the project.[237] Nueve Arte Urbano is an independent graffiti and street art muralism organization that has produced over 600 murals with 400 artists in the Mexican states of Querétaro and Puebla since 2010. In this short period, they have not only produced a record number of murals and artistic activations, but have also become a recognized professional artistic platform for emerging graffiti and street artists in Mexico.[238] Jason and Edgar sparked up a friendship during this time that would grow over the next couple of years and bring them closer together as artists, organizers, and activists. Working together also helped to solidify relations between these artists and organizations leading to even greater mural arts productions for environmental, social, cultural, and political awareness and change.

The Love Letters project was designed to raise public awareness about conserving the Great Lakes and the environmental issues which threaten them. Participating artists also focused their murals on similar issues such as invasive and disappearing or endangered species, pollution, plastics, environmental decay, ecological diversity, negative consequences of maritime economic activity, and wetlands conservation. Additional programming involved panel discussions and an exhibition that took place at a gallery space on 12 Ossington Avenue in the city called Rally Ossington. It was also the location and streets around this gallery space that served as the central mural area for the festival, where about half the murals were painted. Several murals were also painted along Queen Street with the support of local businesses Lululemon Athletica and LUSH signature stores. According to the ossingtonvillage.com web site, the gallery closed in 2017.[239] I am unsure if there were any related events for the 2017 edition. According to the site the space successfully hosted more than 62 events in the two years it operated including "pop-up sales, mural projects, and art exhibitions."[240] Jason said that the primary goal of the exhibit and panel discussion was to inform the public and generate awareness about the Great Lakes and how people can contribute to conserving them.

The other half of the murals were painted on the pillars below the Don Valley Parkway Highway system from the Gardiner Ramps at the mouth of the Don River to the Canadian National Rail Bridge at Don Landing. Additional sponsorship was provided by Friends of the PanAm Path, a collection of organizations and businesses which maintain and support a multi-use path connecting trails in the Greater

Toronto Area from Brampton to Pickering. This collection of murals along the rivers side were meant to pay homage to the Don River and the ecological value of this urban watershed.[241] Jason's mural *Source Pollution (fig. 4.15)* was a simple collage of his signature waves across one of the central DVP pillars representing hope for a healthy rebirth of the Don River. According to the City of Toronto the river has been polluted for years primarily by factories, mills, mines, farms, as well as storm water drainage from the city.[242] Kevin Ledo painted a portrait of the famed Canadian zoologist and environmentalist David Suzuki *(fig. 4.16)*. His mural focused on ecological sustainability, particularly on the conservation of Atlantic salmon that have been over fished and pushed towards extinction due to human activity and pollution.

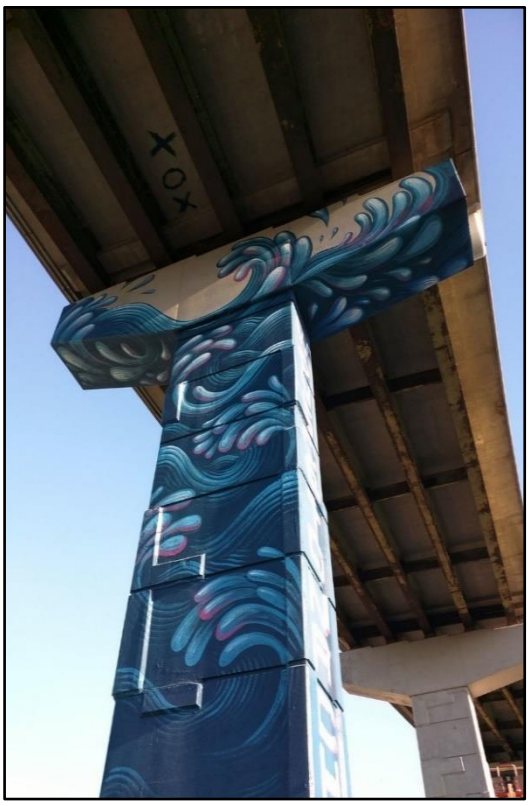

Figure 4.15: *Source Pollution*, Jason Botkin, A Love Letter to the Great Lakes, with Pangea Seed, Toronto, Canada. Photo by Jason Botkin (2017)

Jason was having a hard time balancing his desire to produce environmentally conscience art and commission based projects to make a living. Organizing and coordinating the Love Letter project was stressful and demanding, "I can't paint constantly for environmental issues, for murals around the world. I'd never get paid for that. I worked for six months out of my car last year, six months it took me to (complete) that project in Toronto. That's all I did." It was certainly a meaningful and worthwhile project, and spawned two more iterations in the following years,[243] but it also took away from potential opportunities for other collaborations and work. It also took a personally expensive toll on him, "I invested five thousand dollars of my own money and all that time…It had its strengths, it had its weaknesses. Toronto is a really tough market to pull off that type of (thing)."

His experience co-managing the Love Letters project had left Jason questioning Pangea Seed's management approach as well as their level of commitment and involvement to their projects. Even

with his input and direction it seemed that Pangea Seed was less committed to raising awareness to important water-based and environmental issues than they had initially led on. After having been involved as a co-manager in several projects by this point, they seemed not be making the same efforts as he was towards producing the events or taking advantage of their resources to effect a stronger message. This was also reflected in Pangea Seed's online presence, through their web site and on social media, which Jason saw as being severely underutilized.

I pushed really hard for that…that was one of the things I *really* pushed hard for, the full development of that web site and to begin to tell the story as it really existed. Otherwise I was like, 'you guys are going to have this Instagram account and you're [going to be] as useless as any other of these other [accounts]...overpopulate the world [with]…mural pornography.

Figure 4.16: *David Suzuki with Atlantic Salmon*, Kevin Ledo, A Love Letter to the Great Lakes, with Pangea Seed, Toronto, Canada. Photo by Marcelo Pimentel (2017)

Pangea Seed would go on to institute these changes to their website, and although additional information is included, it is not with all their projects, or to as much detail as the next. Jason decided to take things into his own hands and made a separate site for the Love Letters Project and to add this information feature to the murals produced in Toronto to be sure that they were sufficiently contextualized and linked to more extensive conservation projects and environmental protection organizations. It also seemed that they were not giving Edgar more appreciation for his efforts at sponsoring and supplying these events in Mexico and now in Canada.

The thing was that nobody on the crew, except for Tre and Akira, knew who (Edgar] was…they introduced him, as the representative to the paint company. Not

only was he not the representative, but he paid for it all out of his own pocket, those paint materials…and he's just one of the most incredible men I have ever met…He has this incredible connection to the arts community that he supports extensively in Mexico in ways that are just magnificent. He started forming that support in the way of us and Pangea seed and the Sea Walls project, including shipping *all* of the paint up to Toronto for the Love Letters Project…Pangea seed would go around taking credit for it all but they weren't really doing anything. They didn't really do any of the work for the Love Letter project, my team did. The one thing that they did to my team was sometimes strangle us from operational procedure because they weren't paying attention to what we were communicating to them, which was a real management failure. Ultimately I had to say 'take off the handcuffs now, let us do our job or this is over.'

Regardless of these shortcomings with the Love Letters project, Jason remained committed to working with Pangea Seed Foundation and its partners to raise awareness to water based environmental issues through street art muralism. He was less interested, however, in taking an organizational role. He just wanted to paint some murals and not be bogged down in so much logistical anxiety.

When they called him up for the next two events in San Diego and Grenada in 2017, he once again answered the call for the Sea Walls project. As it turned out, even painting was turning out to be a bit overly stressful. Jason was painting these murals solo which meant that he had to organize his time and materials as best possible so that he could finish on time. Both of these festivals were only held over three or four days leaving Jason and other artists' only limited time to engage with the locals or participate in any other activations associated with them. His San Diego mural was a sizable piece standing three stories high by a couple hundred feet long on an oceanfront bistro. He said that it was nice to be able to paint something about the need to protect coral reef environments, but the mural felt more like an advertisement for the bistro rather than a call for awareness. The Grenada event seemed more in line with Pangea Seed's mandate in that it was a collaboration with Blue Network –a partnership between the governments of Grenada and the Netherlands, with the United Nations Ocean Conference project –to paint ten large scale murals in St. Georges dedicated to ocean conservation.[244] A number of smaller scale murals were also to be painted across the island which focused on raising awareness about endangered species, threatened habitats, and other water related issues.

Even though he was in Grenada for only a few days, Jason was optimistic that he could connect with some of the locals, to hear their thoughts about the project and environmental conservation. His mural, *Sea Turtle,*[245] *(fig. 4.17)* was located along Tanteen Road, the main thoroughfare along St. George's Inner Harbor. The thoroughfare had a good deal of foot traffic, giving him a chance to talk to many people as they walked by during the day. Sadly, he

found that many of the people –including youth from the school that he was painting his mural on –were either uninformed or unaware of the condition of the surrounding oceans or their relation to it and the environment more generally. That struck him as a bit odd considering the context of the festival and the government's efforts to promote ocean conservation. Once again he found himself asking whether these festival activations were really having as much impact as they could, or if it was all just more mural pornography. Still, the idealist in him remained hopeful that the work he and the other artists were doing was stimulating some public discussion and reflection on environmental issues.

Figure 4.17: *Sea Turtle*, Jason Botkin. St. George's, Grenada, with Pangea Seed. Photo by Jason Botkin (2017)

Jason ended up meeting a few local artists while he was painting and talked with them about starting an annual mural festival in Grenada, something focusing on local oceanic habitats. He said that he had some good conversations and most seemed to be interested in the idea. He was mostly working on completing his 100 foot plus long mural in the short time he had, so he was not able to do more than introduce the idea and make some contacts. It was enough to start putting together some material hopefully for the season following. Being able to connect to people through his work, even when only there for a few days at a time, is a truly gratifying experience for Jason, "I'm in that territory doing what I love doing. Talking about issues that I'm passionate about. Using my art as a vehicle and a public platform." Still, he says that it is not enough and that there is a need not just for more local artists helping to produce these types of meaningful projects, but acknowledgement, interest, and support from government too. "I was able to say that part of the problem here is that street art, the culture of art, is not as embedded into the very fabric of society there. I was doing a big piece of work there. I painted the biggest mural in that city in the last three decades…For me it was three days of work, it was fun, (and) it was simple. But they were like holy crap!" He says the importance of having a cadre of local artists like him –graffiti, street, or formal

muralists –is that if an outside artist, from another country, just approached a property owner or official and asked to paint there they would likely tell him no. If a local artist or organizer shows up with some popularity and a plan, however, it's a different thing. He says that sometimes "you need that outside edge to come in and wedge a space, because now when you got that same guy and say we want to do this thing because it's tested and proven, you get permission." He says then you can get support from local community government and sponsors from local businesses and it makes the difference in terms of logistics, funding, and scale of the work that can be accomplished.

That summer Jason painted a mural in Manitoba for Sea Walls on the side of an abandoned radar base near Little Duck Lake. The mural depicted a Sayisi Dene figure offering a pair of stylized caribou antlers to a river of ribbons. The hands of a skeletal figure reach out from the ribbons in prayer *(fig. 4.18)*. It was meant to be a tribute to the people of the Sayisi Dene First Nation who were forcibly relocated in 1956 to protect the caribou population that they traditionally hunted. The relocation was put into motion after a photo of a what appeared to be a large number of caribou carcasses laying on the side of Little Duck Lake was taken by a studying biologist and was misinterpreted as evidence that the Dene were over hunting the caribou. The Canadian government forcibly relocated 250 Sayisi Dene to a settlement called Camp 10 just outside of Churchill Manitoba, far from their hunting and trading territories where they had lived for generations. The relocation was done poorly and without adequate preparation or a full understanding of their needs, culture, or social structure. The abusive and inhumane treatment of the Sayisi Dene, forced relocation and institutionalization in camp 10, inadequate housing and provisions, and culture shock eventually led to 117 deaths, nearly half of the original community. A decade later the federal government moved the Sayisi Dene again to another prebuilt settlement which also failed as a result of poor construction and officials not taking their cultural needs seriously. In 2010 the Manitoba government officially apologized to the Sayisi Dene people and the federal government has earmarked 33 million in compensation for past grievances.[246] Although this mural was more aligned with indigenous rights and raising awareness to past injustices to the Sayisi Dene, Jason was able to paint it under the Sea Walls banner because it was also connected to both Little Duck Lake and the Hudson Bay. Water rights and defending natural water systems has also been central to indigenous culture and activism in North America for generations, more recently making news at the time in North Dakota. In painting this mural under the Sea Walls banner Jason was able to bring these two important activist and rights defense groups together, helping to connect indigenous with environmental activism.

By this point, however, Jason said that the administrative issues and ideological divide between him and Pangea Seed had made working with them increasingly difficult. His work on this project had brought him closer to racism and indigenous experiences of oppression in Canada and it had given him a great deal to think about in terms of the direction he was going in his work:

> I've just been doing a ton of work on that front, and I share hardly any of it. It's really private. It's also really painful. It's hard to walk around with some of your close friends [in] small town Alberta and hear the overt racism directed towards [them] constantly. What to do about that? And to have him take me aside and tell me 'You don't have to do anything. It's not yours to carry.'…Making art in those communities, being trusted to sit and hear their stories, and be witness to that kind of stuff in intimate ways, really changed my *whole* priority system, my way of thinking and my relationship to my art. It was a major leap in evolution. I don't subscribe to most to festivals any longer, or that whole game of street art activity. I really struggled with that sort of stuff and in the last couple of years.

Again he found himself struggling with balancing aspects of work, but this time on an emotional and moral level. Being told by his

Figure 4.18: *Little Duck Lake*, Jason Botkin. Churchill, Canada, with Pangea Seed. Photo by Jason Botkin (2017)

friend that it was not his burden to carry really stuck with him. He wanted to do more with his art and he saw the opportunity to not only branch into new and meaningful work with more indigenous communities but also a way to continue raising awareness about environmental issues. The recent move for the Canadian government to work towards reconciliation and a greater acknowledgement of indigenous rights and knowledge was also something he saw as signaling him that this was indeed the right direction to go with his work. He sees it as "a real call to action for all Canadians to get out

there" and to get involved even if it is just to get more familiar with indigenous culture.

> Maybe get to know someone whose back yard *you* live in, who is a complete stranger to you and in doing so have a really good opportunity to examine your own cultural baggage, bigotries, assumptions…take a look at yourself and where you come from and how you understand your relationship, from a Canadian point of view, with the indigenous population, whose culture represents languages, ideas, philosophies that emerged from the very earth itself an and are close to extinction having just narrowly escaped a cultural genocide no less. There's a lot to unpack there, the least of which is that connection to the land. Their identity is intrinsically connected to the land and…opening the box of reconciliation, the return to indigenous wisdom, which is itself a truly [and] profoundly spiritual act of protecting the environment…that stuff really helped me take a…deeper look at my experiences of a spiritual being…but also how to…move beyond the statistics and figures of scientific documentation about the destruction of the planet that seems to have a negligible influence on anybody really. But the beliefs and emotions of people, that seems to be the door to open.

The following spring Jason would return to Mexico to participate in *Water is One*, an international mural arts festival event co-managed by Pangea Seed and the recently established Mextonia festival (itself a collaborative endeavor between Mexico and Estonia which began in 2017) to raise awareness about water habitat conservation and protection. Although he had seriously questioned whether he would continue to work with Pangea Seed and had been thinking heavily about the future direction of his work since the Churchill Sea Walls project, he decided to accept the invite. He had become good friends with some of the artists and organizers, including Edgar Sanchez whom he had kept in touch with and grown particularly fond of over the last few years. He felt that the two of them had developed a good friendship. Working together again on this upcoming project meant a great deal to him and he was looking forward to it:

> Edgar is somebody who has just such a profound impact on that community, especially the community of graffiti artists. Which very easily and organically bleeds into the muralists and that community. Quite a big family. He creates that. He supports that and encourages that. He is a very important leader of opinion in that community…Edgar is the champion of the region…the patron to dozens within the community that he has supported directly financially, given space to, given paint to, encouraged in terms of creating opportunities for them to paint on major cultural institutions.

Edgar and his partner Sigre Tompel would be present in Estonia and Mexico for these upcoming events as co-organizers,[247] and Martha Cooper had been asked to come document as well. It was going to be a big event.

From Mexico to Estonia and Back Again

According to the event web site, Mextonia is described as an "international transgraffiti muralism festival" meant to be a gift of art, culture, and friendship from Mexico to Estonia to celebrate the republic's 100th anniversary.[248] Culturally, Estonia was experiencing a generational shift with the maturation of a more technologically and digitally oriented post-soviet demographic. For this emerging generation, graffiti and street art are as popular a form of art and expression as the internet is a form of communication. Transgraffiti in positioned as counter-hegemonic and transformative in its capacity to challenge the status quo while re-expressing "deep cultural symbols…in a transcendental and contemporary way."[249] Graffiti and street art muralism would be mobilized to promote the value and importance of Mexican and Estonian unity through cultural symbolism. Although geographically and socially disparate, Mexico and Estonia share similar struggles in establishing their sovereign states, having both fought against foreign conquest and worked to safeguard their indigenous cultures. Mextonia would be a combined artistic and inter-cultural expression of both countries, a celebration of their shared knowledge and wisdom and how their differences can bring them closer together rather than setting them apart. The first part of the festival would take place in Estonia in 2017, directed by Tompel, and the second part in Mexico, directed by Sanchez, the year following.

The Mextonia manifesto, which can be read in full on the festival's web site,[250] is itself a document that harkens back to the original manifestos written by the Mexican muralists a century prior. In particular, it invokes the earlier manifesto by Siqueiros, *Appeal to Plastic Artists in Argentina (1933)*, where he made an impassioned argument for the establishment of the fundamentals for a "movement towards monumental, uncovered public art" which would be "multi-exemplary for the masses." It calls for the re-valorization of monumental public art which celebrates the indigenous histories and cultures of the Mexican and Estonian peoples. Its opening line is a challenge to artists of the world to give themselves to the higher cause or purpose of 'enlightening the world and reality of others' with their creativity, voices, and visions. Mextonia is meant to be a reminder that the power and freedom to create public art also carries with it a responsibility to "of making this place, this world, a better place than how we found it." Mextonia is envisioned as more than just another festival, but as "a cultural process and collective piece of art" which transcends popular conventions of graffiti and street art events in its deeper connections with indigeneity, history, mythology, and ecology.

Over fifty graffiti and street artists painted as many murals in the cities of Tallinn, Narva, Viljandi and Tartu for the Estonia

festival in June 2017. The artists were mostly from Mexico and Estonia but there were also several from Canada, New Zealand, and Spain.[251] As Tompel's expertise was in business administration and marketing, she relied on the assistance and know-how of two local streets based organizations, Stencibility[252] –a graffiti and street art festival –and JJ-Street Baltic Session[253] –a street culture and break dancing festival –to help manage and produce the first half of the festival. As it was the first time travelling to Estonia for many of the visiting artists, they were not knowledgeable about the country's history, culture, and folklore, so workshops were held as well as meetings with all artists, crew, and volunteers. A lengthy process of approval was put into motion some time before the festival to procure permissions from nearly one hundred property owners for walls to be painted. Sketches had to be approved by local counselors and property owners, then adjusted without too much infringement on the artist's creativity. Equipment had to be rented and prepared, and all of the paint was sponsored by Incusa so it also had to be imported from Mexico. All the artists had to include a symbol of Estonian culture as a starting point for their mural from which they could expand or build around towards their intended narrative. Many focused on mythological animals and characters, cultural figures, and folk stories.

Only several of the participating artists were not Mexican or Estonian. Two were from New Zealand, Aaron Glasson and Cinzah Merkins, whom had worked with Sea Walls prior to this event; Boa Mistura from Spain; and Five8 from Canada. Five8's contribution was a 3 storey mural adorning the front entrance of Science building of the Tallinn Technical University (TTÜ), meant to pay homage to the Estonian cyberneticist and academician Boriss Tamm (1930-2002).[254] He wanted to celebrate Tamm by painting the figurative subject of a woman altered by video distortion effects such as those which were originally explored by the early cybernetic artists Nam June Paik, John Whitney and others.[255] In using a color palette inspired by Estonia's flag, he also wanted to offer an inspirational piece for future generations of creators and innovators who continue to pursue cybernetics through the sciences and arts[256] *(fig. 4.19)*.

This festival was an in depth event that took place over a two week period allowing the artists to engage much more meaningfully with the communities that they painted in. Additional programming was added to the festival in the spirit of cultural exchange and friendship, besides nightly social gatherings and events. Inauguration and recognition ceremonies were held to honor and appreciate the artists but also to acknowledge their achievement in coming together to participate in this momentous event. Exchange days were held where participants learned about each other's history, folklore, cuisine, song and dance, as well as a day long summer

solstice event to give the Mexican artists a taste of 9th century Viking culture. Finally, an art bazaar and artist panel discussion were held where participants discussed the value and impact of graffiti and street art muralism projects.

The second event, *Water is One*, was held in Queretaro, Mexico at the end of March to the beginning of April 2018. The location was at the Educational and Cultural Center of the State of Querétaro (CECEQ), just next to San Francisquito, one of the many neighborhoods Sanchez had worked for years with youth and graffiti

Figure 4.19: *Untitled* (Homage to Booris Tamm), Five8, Mextonia. Tallinn, Estonia. Photo by Five8 (2018)

artists. The cultural center is an important community resource which is regularly used for concerts, workshops, exhibitions, classes, conferences and other events. The city's museum of science and technology is also housed in the center, including a Foucault pendulum for which a 28 meter high by 36 meter in diameter domed structure was especially constructed in 2005. Organisers invited a group of local and international graffiti and street artists –mostly from Mexico but also from Estonia, New Zealand, Canada, France, and the United States –to paint the walls and dome of the pendulum structure.[257] Overall, more than 3,000 square meters of surface area across the cultural center structure and some surrounding walls was set to be painted over the two week period. As well, the festival would incorporate outreach and learning activities related to water conservation and protection, ocean-based environmentalism, and art activism, including panel discussions with artists, organizers, and academics. Edgar had also arranged for a traditional Concheros

dancing ceremony to be held in honor the event and the participating artists.

Jason knew that this was going to be a big event and he hoped that he would have more time to get involved in the extra-curricular activities, but he was also going to be helping manage everything. If it was anything like The Love Letters project, he knew it was likely going to be complicated and stressful. “I was going to paint a wall and I was going to support the festival. I was going to do both. So it was an insane amount of work.” He said that he got used to coming home exhausted after these busy four day festival events, but he also “learned how to paint fast. I learned how to paint big, fast, and not really think about it.”

Figure 4.20: Panel murals on Educational and Cultural Center of the State of Querétaro (CECEQ), Water is One, with Pangea Seed. Photo by Martha Cooper (2018)

The Dome’s structure at the base was sectioned out in 8 foot by 8 foot squares that the artists filled in creating a sort of paneled presentation of their mural works *(fig. 4.20).* Jason was given a section to paint on the eastern side, about 40 feet or so by a couple of storey’s high. The dome at the top of the structure was divided into four sections, representing the four elements and cardinal directions *(fig. 4.21)*.[258] On the exterior walls of center’s courtyard artists painted a series of interconnected murals.[259] About a dozen graffiti artists from across the city were also invited to participate in the event by painting a collaborative graffiti production across the entirety of the long running exterior wall along the parking area of the cultural center (fig. 4.22).[260]At the eastern end of the cultural center complex, the Japanese artist Sh11na also added a mural addressing the precarious life and death relationship between humans and water.

Finally in the final few days of the festival, and perhaps most impressively, Jason would paint a rendition of the Aztec calendar sun stone at the very top of the dome, above the monumental murals, representing the four pillars of the Mesoamerican heavens. On top

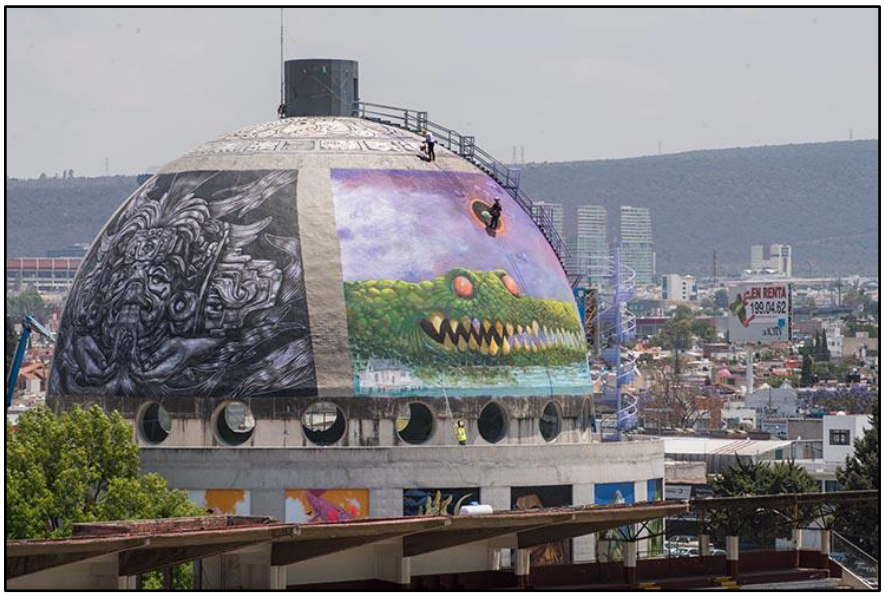

Figure 4.21: Murals on dome of Educational and Cultural Center, Water is One, with Pangea Seed, Querétaro, Mexico. Photo by Martha Cooper (2018).

of the mural he painted at the base and the additional work he put in to help coordinate the overall flow of the pieces across the cultural center, he would complete this final component by himself. Although he painted it alone, he also had the help and support of a professionally trained rappel safety team so he could safely access the area. He had to be checked out by a medical crew daily to ensure that he was not suffering from sun stroke or fatigue throughout those final days.

Jason's mural at the base of the dome, *Cultural Hybridization*, was a duo portrait meant to symbolize the two distinct but integrated halves of Mexican post-Columbian identity *(fig.4.23).* On the one side is St. Francis of Assisi, the highly venerated patron saint of the poor, nature and animals. His teachings were widely spread by Franciscan friars in the 16th century throughout Mexico during the Spanish colonial conquest and has since become an integral part of the Latin-Christian religious identity. On the other side is the plumed feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl, one of the most powerful deities of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures, regarded as a great civilizer/conqueror who represented both of the sky and the land, and from whose mouth flows the waters of life. The Aztecs worshipped Quetzalcoatl alongside another great pre-Columbian deity named Tezcatlipoca and were considered to be mirrors of each other. Flanking each side of these dual central figures are a pair of hands

facing outwards offering a yogic blessing while from beneath their robes emerge the poor seeking guidance and water.

This mural took Jason the better part of the first 9 or 10 days to fully complete. He had also been helping in his capacity as co-manager for the event to get the initial set up going, making sure that everyone had their materials and equipment, and that they were properly situated. He already had the idea of the mural and a mock sketch set up but it sort of took on a life of its own as he settled in and got to painting with Sermob and Aaron on his flanks. The organizers sort of just gave him room to do his own thing knowing

Figure 4.22: Graffiti wall exterior Educational and Cultural Center of the State of Querétaro (CECEQ), Water is One, with Pangea Seed. Photo by Martha Cooper (2018)

that he could handle himself between performing his artistic work and managing the others around him. As they had had some difficulties on the Love Letters project they also decided to rely on Jason's capacity as an experienced event manager to get the work done. But as their work developed, Jason also found himself leading the coordination between the other artists helping them to fill in and tie their respective pieces together more organically:

> They gave me a wall and I just kept making it bigger every day…they just let me go more and more…it was like they gave me carte blanche to create this really weird installation…it just sort to unraveled. Aaron Glasson and I were side by side. He was well ahead of me starting so I tied my color schematic to match. Sermob was beside me and he started after me so he tied his color pattern into mine, and we all, from that place, it really began spreading, and we started coordinating for the large part across the entire surface. I went in and was helping Sermob because he was kind of running out of time so I painted a bunch on that side too.

Besides his tireless work at his wall and coordinating the mural productions of the other participating artists, Jason also found the time to clean up after the days were done, organize and account for the materials. He even the floors of the shared artists' each evening and kept the living area ordered and neat. Jason put in a great deal of effort into this project not just because he was a committed co-manager but because he really believed in making the most that he could of it. He had seen too many projects, Pangea Seed's and others, over the last few years that did not live up the hype and expectations that they had promoted. They always fell short of their intended goals and seemingly could not reach or connect with wider audiences. For Jason this was the opportunity they had been waiting for to make a bigger impact and to potentially reach those audiences and he was not going let the project fall short of its objectives or be left incomplete.

Figure 4.23: *Cultural Hybridization*, Jason Botkin, Water is One, with Pangea Seed, Querétaro, Mexico. Photo by Martha Cooper (2018).

His determination and focus, however, had also distracted him from taking better care of himself over the last week and a half in the burning Mexican sun. Indeed he always had sun screen and a wide brimmed sun hat on keep him shaded but he was pulling off 12 hour plus days going nonstop. It eventually caught up with him, "By that point I was sick, I got Moctezuma's Revenge. I was holding nothing down every day…I lost 15 pounds in the course of 2 weeks and was already skeletal to begin with. So I was 135 lbs." Struggling as he was, Jason realized that they were running out of time to complete all the pieces in the project and there was still the very top of the dome that had yet to be started. Several local graffiti artists had been

scheduled to paint the top of the dome but backed out at the last minute. They would have had to belay down its face and they were unprepared for the height and the challenge of painting under those conditions.

Jason got together with Edgar and they held a meeting with everyone to brain storm how they could get the top of the dome finished in the next few days. Everyone was tired and strained after 11 days in the sun and things got a little heated when they were discussing safety and logistics issues. It seemed like a dead lock, nobody was willing to get up there and take the risk to paint. So Jason put his foot forward and offered to do it himself. “I don’t mind heights. I'm appropriately nervous at that height…so I was like 'Alright, I'll do it.'” Tre Packard and several others tried to talk him out of it pointing out that he was already fatigued and sick to his stomach. He was in no condition to be up there painting, they said. Jason is a stubborn guy though, and he was having no one of it.

They let me up there, but with vigorous protest. So much so that we almost called off the whole thing. I was like 'If you don’t let me paint this, I'm walking. That's it, we don’t have any relationship anymore. This is just too important to drop, so let me.' Not to be too conceited but I didn’t give them much choice.

Finally they agreed but before he was given permission to go up and paint, he had to go through a quick training program with the safety team to be sure he was comfortable with and able to operate in the harness needed to belay down the face of the dome. He also needed to pass a wellness and health checkup each morning before starting to be sure he was not suffering from sun stroke, to check his heart rate and blood pressure, and ensure that his vision was not compromised. Jason was definitely sick but they only had five days left in the festival so he decided to fake his way through it all as much as he could.

After he was cleared to paint the top of the dome, he and Edgar went up to survey the area and discuss what they were going to paint up there. The two of them had been meeting daily to talk about the ongoing project along with Martha Cooper, how the murals and event were coming along but also philosophically about what the project meant and stood for. He mentioned that the online write-ups and blog posts associated with the festival that delved more deeply into the mytho-religious, sociocultural, and ecological connections came mostly from those meetings. “It was definitely an incredibly powerful synergy." Time was running thin though and they needed to figure it out as soon as possible. When he got up there Jason said he was struck with a profound idea. “I was like, what about the calendar?' Edgar thought it was perfect.”…He's very connected to the elders there…when he talks about the calendar he *knows* about it and has really embodied a lot of those philosophical principles into

his life at a core level." Indeed, Edgar was also a student of the Conchero dancers, having studied under the Captain-General who was set to perform a dancing ceremony once the project had been completed. Painting the sun stone at the top of the dome to tie in the rest of the murals in the project could not have been more relevant.

Edgar's description of the murals from a 2018 post on the Nueve web site does well to highlight this important mythological connection and how the dome itself anchors the project between the celestial and earthly realms making it a truly transcendental work:

> The discourse of the dome murals rests on the shoulders of the creators of the past. This altarpiece of transgraph murals, blessed by the General…is an offering from the people to the people. It tells us about the mystery of creation according to the Mesoamerican worldview…The dome, a piece of pieces, narrates in the metalanguage of the (pieces), a contemporary and popular version of the myths that gave meaning to the lives of our ancestors. It hides a solar disk at its top, while the pendulum of the dance of the sky with the earth hangs inside the dome. Thus he reminds us that we live: "in the navel of the moon, the center of the earth, where we offer our hearts to the sun.[261]

According to pre-Columbian mythology, Ometeotl, an Aztec creation deity, produced four sons, the Tezcatlipocas, who represent the four directions (North, East, South, West) and elements (Earth, fire, water, and wind). The pillars of the dome then represent the Tezcatlipocas, both in their cardinal and elemental forms, holding up the sky and acting as conduits through which cosmic and natural forces, flow from the heavens and through the earth. The murals both celebrate and preserve this mythic and ancient knowledge through a collection of representations and stories presented through the contemporary styles and forms of graffiti and street art muralism. The painting of the Aztec sun calendar around the crown of the dome with the additional symmetry of the Foucault pendulum at its center unifies these elements arund the dome and cultural center.

Working from a photocopy print out, Jason spent the next four days free hand painting the calendar at the top of the dome practically cooking in his safety harness and helmet. "I drew out the vertical axis and I knew where they were and we aligned it correctly...I just totally free handed it as fast as possible. Half that time there was Martha Cooper hanging off a rope up there with me, taking pictures." At 74 years old, Martha's energy and commitment to documenting this project, and her continued work in the graffiti and street art communities more generally, is simply awe inspiring. For hours at a time Martha stood practically vertically poised on the edge of the dome 30 meters up documenting Jason's final and herculean feat for the event *(fig. 4.24)*. Indeed, Edgar was quoted later as saying that Jason's work on the project "met and exceeded human and creative limits" and that without his passion and dedication to seeing the project through that it may not have been finished.

On the final day of the project, as Jason was finishing off the dome *(fig. 4.25)* and doing some touch ups to bring all the sections together, Edgar arranged for a Concheros group to perform a smudging and dance ceremony in front of the cultural center. The dancers, led by Don Manuel Rodríguez González, a captain general of a number of dance groups in the San Francisquito neighborhood in Querétaro, went from mural to mural thanking the artists for their work and blessing them with health, happiness, and a safe trip home. A traditional ritual dance, the Concheros developed as a way to preserve ancient knowledge, rites, and culture after the Spanish invaded in the 16th century *(fig. 4.26).* As an embodiment of the pre-Columbian Mesoamerican ritual battles called flowery wars, the Concheros then is a deeply spiritual way of reconnecting with and expressing a lost Mexica identity. In a 2018 post on the Nuevo web site, Edgar referred to the graffiti and street artists of*Water is One* in a similar fashion, calling them 'Nueves and creative warriors' who were upholding the tenets of the "transgrafitero manifesto" with their work on the dome of the Gómez Morín Cultural Center.[262] Indeed, much like the Concheros who do battle with their instruments and dance to preserve their culture and identities, these graffiti and street artists represent a new generation of warriors armed with brushes, rollers, spray cans, and paint. They use creativity to seek a balance between traditional and contemporary styles and forms, and through that collaborative synergy, celebrate indigeneity, history, mythology, and ecology. Furthermore, creativity is at the core of this cultural exchange between Mexico and Estonia, as well as the other participating artists from New Zealand, Canada, Japan, the United States, and France, which at its heart calls for innovative and

Figure 4.24: Jason Botkin painting top of dome, Water is One, with Pangea Seed, Querétaro, Mexico. Photo by Martha Cooper (2018).

dynamic responses to social and environmental issues in these countries, and others around the world.

All the murals for *Water is One* were completed and the event provided a profoundly spiritual, cultural and creative monument to

Figure 4.25: *Aztec Sun Calendar*, Jason Botkin, Water is One, with Pangea Seed, Querétaro, Mexico. Photo by Martha Cooper (2018).

the people of Mexico and the city of Querétaro. Strong friendships had been forged throughout the two events and many of the artists had benefited from their cross cultural exchanges. Moreover, the Estonian people had been put back in touch with their own indigenous culture and history that, when put into dialogue with the knowledge and spirit of Mexican indigeneity, created new and creative opportunities to celebrate their national and ethnic identities. The success of the event, however, came at a heavy cost for Jason who had gone above and beyond the commitments of any of the other artists or organizers, even risking his health, pushing himself to his physical and mental limits to see the project completed. Once again he was burnt out. He was left with a feeling of great accomplishment but his body and mind were simply drained and exhausted. He says that he has been "paying the bill" for having over extended himself travelling and painting with Pangea Seed and other projects so much over the last few years. "I sacrificed really taking care of myself through any of that process and I just completely burned out, completely." Adding to that, the managerial and operational problems within the organization and growing ideological divide between himself and the other organizers had gotten to a point where working with Pangea Seed was no longer tenable.

One of the things working with Pangea Seed is that people would gather for ten days for a sea walls festival and there was small body of us of artists and administrators, who were hustling for the first five days of the event, hustling to get everyone up on their walls, get them their materials, and then we had our walls to paint.

Figure 4.26: Concheros group to perform a smudging and dance ceremony in front of the cultural center, Water is One, with Pangea Seed, Querétaro, Mexico. Photo by Martha Cooper (2018).

He mentioned the 500 foot plus long mural that he painted with Cinzah Merkins on the side of the National Aquarium in New Zealand in 2016 and how they were alone painting for four and a half days. They had no time for anything else of import while there except to paint the mural. After a while of doing these projects where he flies in and hastily paints a mural, parties and socializes with other artists and then jets out again, it starts to feel like any other urban arts festival. He said that it just felt like an incomplete project if they are not being more involved or doing more to connect the art to the communities they are painted in, to rally raise awareness and not just talk about it over drinks. He learned how to 'paint fast and not think about it' but it seems that the events were really designed for him and the other artists not to really think at all except for their mural work, which given the circumstances were really just splashed together rather quickly. Getting plenty of time to prepare and plan it out before getting to the wall, " makes all the difference in the world. I thought that's kind of the caliber of offering that I could never get in the Sea Walls project because I would only have a few days to pack all that in."

In the end, Jason felt that there were political and personal differences that were just not able to be bridged no matter how much he or the other organizers tried to work them out. Fundamentally, they just had different ideas about the direction and approach of the

organization. Moreover, Jason felt that the environmental movement was also changing into something that he no longer recognized. The mural projects that he had participated in or co-managed with Pangea Seed had all been successful to some degree but they still followed organizational models which relied too heavily on promoting tourism and commerce development. “It got hijacked...I began to question some of the narratives around that and how it was working and why it was working. That began with Pangea Seed and my falling out. Either this does effectively help communities or it’s a project of narcissism. Ultimately I left."[263]

Jason sees his own personal journey over the last few years, from En Masse to Pangea Seed, as an important process that has helped him to understand much more clearly the value of interdependence, cooperative living, and collaborative artistic projects. “There is an important function that has been eroded to the detriment of cultural eco system,” he said. “I’m very fascinated by and try my best to align myself with the possibilities of those which are interdependent thinking and being with others.” He has also learned that maintaining the integrity of arts projects to their intended or original goals is often complicated by the demands or interests of sponsoring agencies. In his case he had to deal with private and public sponsors as well as deal with the organizational and ideological differences which developed between team members over time. Eventually it pushed him away from working with them and on festivals more generally. There were some deep ideological divides that developed as well as his moral convictions and views had also changed over the last few years. Thinking back to when he and Tim were first putting the En Masse project together, the two of them had many conversations about what it was supposed to represent. “It was not just making cool art but making cool art in service of what...An anecdote to what problem perhaps? Tim and I had real issues that we wanted to tackle…working in communities and working collaboratively in the En Masse project, was something *really* valuable potentially.”

Since 2018 Jason has slowed down in his mural work, taking more time recuperate his health and to digest his experiences over the last few years. The projects that he does commit himself to tend to be focused on indigenous and environmental issues and he has not participated in any major urban arts festivals. Rather than putting his energies into pop up activism through targeted mural projects and festivals, he is more concerned about building up communities and how interdependent living and cooperation, both on an interpersonal and environmental level, can lead to lasting and meaningful change. Thinking about the history of political and activist oriented muralism, he wonders if the lessons we learned from of the Chicago muralists from the late 1960s have been squandered and if the

contributions that he has worked on have connected to or revived some of that political spirit.

> How does art emancipate people? And what were they doing?…we still struggle to this day with...the kind of collective affiliation it engenders, the quality, the textures of those new relationships…ultimately the solutions to *any* of our problems we are facing right now…[are] resolved primarily by the community's capacity to co-manage [their] shared resource. How you do that is very difficult. Using art as a tool to model that behavior is *vital*.

The antagonistic and political muralists of the late 1960s challenged the status quo and utilized muralism as a site from which to disseminate and develop a discourse of resistance. Jason is not sure what is even emancipatory anymore in his art or public art. What he has learned is that art is the key, it is the process where we can create the change we want to see in the world. He says that he is still figuring it out but that we need to rely on each other if any change is going to happen. "Building communities" and "exploring shared creativity" are central to the success of mural arts projects he says, "If we don't do those things then we don't deserve to even consider ourselves capable of conducting a participatory democratic society."

Street Art Muralism & the Construction of a Political Frontier

Told namely from the perspectives of two street art muralists, Jason Botkin and Kevin Ledo, the discussion in this chapter has endeavored to show how socially engaged street art is being mobilized towards activist projects. These projects are embedded in a number or resistances that question the neoliberal model: Kevin working with a range of causes and organizations (refugees, anti-war, anti-racism, indigenous representation, environmentalism, poverty) and Jason being more focused on environmental conservation and working mostly with one organization, Pangea Seed. Their work has helped to confront social injustices and raise awareness to important global issues through events, projects, and festivals. The contingencies and contradictions surrounding project goals, funding and management appear to have stemmed from conflicting hegemonic orientations both internally between artists and organizers, as well as externally with sponsors and local governments. Street artists like Kevin and Jason as well as organizers like Sanchez, Tompel, de los Rios, Cassasco, and Packard, among others, had to work together to navigate these inconsistencies while struggling to ensure that their activist projects found success in reaching their goals and communicating their intended messages and critiques to wider audiences. They were not always successful and in some cases these internal and external pressures threatened to either cancel the projects or dissolve relations between project

members. Both artists also had their own struggles and respective journeys over the last few years, learning to work with new activist groups and organizations while being put into contact with a variety of social, cultural, political, and environmental circumstances and issues. Working with the growing community of artivists who are developing vocabularies and repertoires of practice and knowledge has also influenced the ways in which they both practice and apply their art.

Water is one, the Sea Walls festivals, the RAW project, and even smaller interventions such as those organized by AptArt, create the conditions where critical artistic interventions can connect with mass audiences on deeply cultural and affective levels. For the most part, they were able to achieve these connections because of the institutional support they received to produce mural projects openly in communities, sometimes with their assistance. It is the public character of these mural projects that also ensures that they will remain in place and be accessible to the communities that they were painted in for a much longer time than if they had been accomplished illicitly. Moreover, besides instilling communities with a renewed sense of pride, these mural projects also engender forms of civic participation and responsibility in how local residents helped to produce the murals and then maintain and protect them and the public spaces where they were produced.

At the same time, what their experiences and these inconsistencies have shown is that it is still an ongoing project rife with contradictions that arise from competing ideologies and approaches. This is less of a setback than it seems, however, as public art should be populated by such competing hegemonic voices and visions if new and radical forms of democratic practices are to be established in the larger agonistic project that Mouffe advocates for. The street artists and organizations discussed in this chapter are uniquely positioned to help in the visual construction of new social, political, cultural and environmental frontiers. This is because they organize themselves socially in ways which lend to the development of new vocabularies and repertoires of practice, but also because of their willingness to engage with institutional support. The relations between artists, organizers and institutions, however, requires constant testing to guard against the total commodification of activist projects and to ensure that commercial and government interests do not become totally socially mobilized. Regardless of the difficulties in balancing this precarious relationship between institutions and street art activism, socially engaged street artists must continue their efforts to find better ways to work with them, as well as each other if they hope to continue having successes with their projects. Critical interventions need to be collectively recognized in order to be successful, for it is this collective recognition which popularizes

critique into common knowledge. It is the argument of this chapter that such collective recognition can be made more effective if artists accept institutional partnership more readily. Importantly, the clarity of shared goals and the promotion of inclusive rhetoric and values by institutions are just as important to establishing enduring chains of equivalency.

Institutional partnership and support is an essential component agonistically driven political activism and strategies need to embrace in order to achieve greater success. Representative institutions, like municipal governments, have a role to play in facilitating and supporting discussion and debate between competing social and political discourses, including those found in graffiti and street art mural projects. As important as institutional support is, it must also be qualified, that is, *capable and competent* in this regard to ensure that alternative discussions and debates are given the space to be heard and seen. To that effect, organizers and artists need to stand for their ideas and not buckle to corporate or government pressure to conform to their hegemonic agendas. As the artists and organisers in this chapter have shown, you need to know where to push and pull, there is an art of the compromise that can only really be learned through experience. Jason's compromise for his sidewalk pieces for Mural Festival in 2016 or Kevin's use of an alternative portrait in Denver to resolve possible community tensions are good examples of this. As discussed in previous chapters, neo management attitudes and strategies have worked to move graffiti and street art muralists towards more normative and conforming behaviors, from unpredictable and alternative lifestyles towards more common/pedestrian and predictable ones. In a similar manner, neo-management strategies aim to move street artists away from critical interventions and towards commercial or formal activations. Still, the relationships and organizational protocols that come out from these activations can help to develop repertoires of practice and knowledge through legal and institutional frameworks, rather than from illicit or illegal acts as Isin has discussed.

Institutional partnership or support is also not without its organizational and management issues which often intersect with tensions surrounding competing attitudes and project goals among community stakeholders. Artists and organizers are still evaluating their relationship with institutional support, forming their repertoires of practice and knowledge while also trying to be attentive and empathic towards those they work with, and for who they are representing. For the most part it seems that the art of compromise is something the many street artists are learning to apply in their interactions with institutional partners, but sometimes grievances cannot be resolved and partnerships dissolve, projects end or are left uncompleted. Differences and problems at the managerial and

ideological levels led to Jason splitting ways with Pangea Seed but he has still taken all of what he has learned to his next projects with indigenous communities. He is also continuing his environmental conservation awareness work too, just on a smaller and less complicated level. The AptArt projects Kevin worked on were not always logistically organized as best as they could have been and their relationships with their institutional partners are not always solid. In Beirut Kevin learned how institutional support can just be taken away sometimes if communications breakdown happen due to conflicts of interest. When the UN pulled their support from the project they had to scramble to put it all together and for a short while it looked like they would not compete it at all. Although under intense pressure, they put their resources together and they figured it out, relying on their informal approaches to acquiring wall space and community support for the project. The AptArt projects that Kevin worked on were also some of the first foreign socially engaged mural projects in these parts of Jordan, Iraq, and Syria. The success of these projects helped to establish a baseline of operations and conduct – repertoires and frameworks of practice and knowledge –for these regions: appropriate forms of contact with the local communities and governments, budget issues and restrictions, cross-cultural interactions, community support, religious and ethnic considerations, and other logistical concerns.

Developing these repertoires of practice and knowledge is also a discussion about the efficacy of legal as opposed to illegal approaches to political activism. It is important to analyze and understand performance-driven acts of citizenship that create ruptures in normative scripts exposing contradictions and paradoxes of formal narratives. At the same time, we should also give serious attention to counter hegemonic projects and collective artistic practices that serve similar purposes and help build momentum towards reform and real change. What better place to look for novel approaches to developing a vocabulary and repertoires of knowledge and practice than in public projects which are already using the language of the system they aim to reform.

In thinking about Banksy's Gaza Strip project, perhaps the Israeli government would not be so interested if it were presented as a legal event or festival. It is also conceivable that a more transparent and legal approach, such as applying to property owners along the Palestinian side of the Gaza Strip to paint large scale murals, could have also been successful. Regardless, valuable experience and knowledge could have been gained which artists and organizers could have revised and applied to the next opportunity. In doing so, the murals could have been larger and more representative than they were creative and playful or the projects could have been more attuned to local attitudes and concerns. If Banksy and his group of

collaborating artists had worked more closely and openly with the communities then perhaps they could have learned more about their lives and experiences living in the shadow of the wall, and then been able to visually represent their thoughts and ideas in a more collaborative intervention. Instead they were met with suspicion and antagonism by some of the elders and townsfolk which only further alienated them from the project and participating artists. The 'interpretive games' that these street artists are playing have certainly helped to pave the way in challenging institutional qualifications for those deserving of, at the very least, basic human rights and dignities. In pursuing their project illegally, however, they realized that anything else was beyond the scope of their capacities, even as popular international artists and activists. This shows how these illegal street art projects lack the organizational and collective force to effect real social change.

In making this comparison I am pointing out the value of working with communities and institutions to create meaningful and apposite works of public art that are representative of the people and their struggles. Kevin's work with the RAW project, for example, shows how working with local institutions and partners can lead to more positive relations with communities and potential for lasting change. De Los Rios and his team started with a single project at one elementary school where they learned how to deal with the school administration, municipal and state government representatives, budget and logistical issues, on top of organizing artists, materials, and equipment. They were able to take their framework from one school and apply it to several more in Miami, and then successfully transplanted it across state lines into Denver, Colorado. De los Rios and his team plan on moving the project to other states and schools in the future as well. Jason took his managerial and entrepreneurial experience from his work with En Masse and Pangea Seed to co-manage and plan a festival event in Toronto and Mexico helping to build repertoires of practice and knowledge with other socially engaged street artists and activists.

The closer examination of these projects and the relationships between artists, organizers, communities, and institutions that developed around them also reveals how they create opportunities for enduring chains of equivalency. Street art muralism can be a conduit through which the many different and disparate social, cultural, political, and environmental projects come together. For instance, Mextonia and Water is One showed how countries from different sides of the globe can come together to celebrate their cultural differences as well as build new networks and knowledge in the fight against social injustices, political apathy, and environmental degradation. Socially engaged muralism can be a critical resource to help communities rearticulate claims as much as

a mechanism to inspire social actors to employ in socio-economic, cultural, and political critique. Mouffe has argued that the creation of a collective will through equivalences demands "the designation of an adversary" (2018: 63), an opponent which allows for the drawing of a frontier to designate a *We* opposed to a *They*, which is decisive in the formation of a *people*. Relating to these activist projects, the *We* can be considered to be those artists, organizers, appreciators, enthusiasts, and supporters of a cause (anti-racism, anti-war, environmentalists and conservationists, social and political progressives, indigenous communities, anti-corporate, etc.) while *They* can be considered to be those who stand opposed to them (multi-national corporations, war profiteers, social and political conservatives). In order for these socially engaged mural projects to be effective, however, they need to have legacies, that is, they need to be carried on not just by the artists and organizers but by the people as well.

Boltanksi and Chiapello would have us believe that critique has been replaced with a paralyzing fatalism and that people do not believe that they can create change in the world and so have lost sight of a future where they are active participants. I would contend that it is not fatalistic but *hopeful and optimistic*. Although the collective spirit of artistic activism has been diminished over the last forty years, it has not disappeared. Fractured, minimized, and more specifically oriented in scope, but not beyond repair. When speaking to graffiti and street art muralists who continue to make artistic interventions locally and abroad I am always struck by their positivity and especially their desire to engage more meaningfully with the communities they paint in. I believe that it is from these streets-based arts where we will continue to see genuine resistance to new forms of capitalism assumed by economic activity. Critical artistic interventions in the form of socially engaged mural projects are one such form of resistance today, and they offer new avenues towards the implementation of radical tests which can help to articulate claims to injustice in the world.

Conclusion

Murals are important sites to explore social, cultural and political attitudes, offering perspective into a society's values and morals over time. This dissertation has explored the social and cultural relations that surround the production and consumption of street art muralism as a means of gaining insight into the two major projects to which it has been primarily mobilized in North American society. In the first project, street art muralism is being used as an alternative strategy to beautify inner city neighborhoods, enhance tourism programs, boost local commerce, and encourage new creative industries. This is being accomplished through urban arts districts and so-called mural festivals which function to economically magnetize and aesthetically regenerate inner-city neighborhoods, commercial and post-industrial areas. The spectacle of mural production fits neatly into post-Fordist economic strategies which aim to use cultural entertainment as a means of mass consumption. The commodification of street art muralism and its production also offers the opportunity to enhance or expand creative industries as part of the process of urban regeneration and redevelopment. The second major project street art muralism is being mobilized towards is the revival of critique through the confrontation of social injustices and raising of public awareness to environmental and global issues. As a critical artistic practice, street art muralism can offer alternative narratives to the status quo, make the invisible visible, and give voice to the voiceless by helping to visualize claims to rights, dignity, and recognition of marginalized groups. The discussion of these two projects then has also been a critical debate concerning the role of muralism as a public art in North America. On one side of the argument murals should be mobilized to creatively confront and critique the status quo, reflect the diversity of culture in society, and enrich our perspectives and imaginations. On the other side is the argument that it should be mobilized to make our cities interesting, attractive, and fun while helping to boost local commerce and property values.

How artists and other stakeholders struggle with the tensions, contingencies, and contradictions that emerge from the culture and politics of neoliberal management strategies which come to bear upon these two projects, has been the central focus of this research. This dissertation has also been a debate about spontaneity and orthodoxy as much as permanence and ephemerality in public art, in that the same neoliberal management strategies that work to diminish spontaneous social and political expression also aim to reduce the spaces in society for a sustainable public culture and memory. This necessitated a breakdown of street art muralism into its constitutive elements of *muralism, graffiti and street art:* the historical trajectory

of these interrelated artistic practices, what sorts of tensions and struggles that artists and stakeholders identify with, and finally, what informs their motivations for pursuing these modes of artistic practice.

At first this was done through the lens of the social and political antagonism of Mexican and American muralism from the 1920s to the 1970s. Having recently endured their own revolution, the Great Mexican painters who visited the Soviet Union in early 20th century were heavily influenced by the revolutionary tenants of socialism and how they could serve as an alternative to capitalism. They wanted to take the best aspects of it back to Mexico and uplift the people through grand narrative art that communicated these values while celebrating their cultural heritage. Their efforts influenced American muralists who also saw the opportunity to use the mural arts as a means to celebrate history, culture, and identity but to also to provide alternative perspectives, challenge dominant ideologies, and critique the status quo. Both the early Mexican and American muralists faced opposition from government agencies and patrons intent on censoring and sanitizing their efforts. Their activism and resistance helped to not only raise awareness to alternative social, political, and historical perspectives but also to how the mural arts could be a powerful tool to effect real social change.

Funding for the public arts, including muralism, were diverted to war efforts for the next 30 years leaving little to no room for anything other than the most patriotic narratives or subjects. In the late 1960s and early 1970s artists put the ideals of the early muralists into practice again with community oriented projects, boldly appropriating pubic space to make social and political claims and to develop discourses of resistance. In following the great muralists of the previous generation, these artists also devised their own manifestos and strategies of rebellion against prevailing elites and systems of social, economic, and political inequality. Commercial and government interests again worked to subvert their efforts through systems of management and control, monetary incentives, and career opportunities. Graffiti and street art emerged during this period both as a response to these systems of control but also as a reaction to the lack of opportunities and resources for people to act, create, and express themselves. As counter hegemonic practices, graffiti and street art offered alternative lifestyles, pathways towards career success, and modes of critical artistic intervention. Constraints, restrictions, and censorships also continued to be imposed on those who did not conform to regulative and bureaucratic systems of management and control, stifling the spontaneity of these streets based arts by bending them to the orthodoxy of New Capitalism. The formal organization and uplifting of street art muralism extended these strategies of regulation and

management implemented by neo-liberal forces to pacify the radical uncertainties and antagonisms presented by graffiti and street art. Tensions between graffiti and street artists, however, limited the range of these meaningful interactions and the formation of a unifying or collective movement. Additionally, the moral enterprising of street art above graffiti and the growth of economies of muralism have displaced and dispossessed the graffiti subculture exacerbating antagonisms between artists. Finally, it was argued how street art muralism holds the greatest promise for the reconstitution of the political in the arts today because artists have been able to establish new vocabularies and repertoires of practice and knowledge through their activist projects to successfully reach their goals as well as communicate their intended messages and critiques to wider audiences.

In this conclusion I summarize my findings and arguments concerning the role of street art muralism as a public art and offer some suggestions for how graffiti and street art cadres can be used to help expand both the access to and interest in radical forms of democratic practice. First, the continuing significance and value of the Mexican and New Deal Era murals to current conversations on racism and colonialism, censorship and freedom of expression will be discussed. Some of the murals produced during the New Deal era have come under scrutiny by special interest and community groups in United States for their content and subject matter. Petitions to have them destroyed, removed or painted over have been circulated – some with more success than others –because the murals are considered to be offensive or unrepresentative of current community and cultural standards. Several murals in Chicago schools and Victor Arnautoff's murals in George Washington High School in San Francisco will be used to show how they are as relevant to public discussions regarding institutionalized racism and decolonization as they were a century ago. Requests to have them removed or destroyed reveal how we still have much to do in terms of confronting our historical attitudes regarding these topics.

Second, while institutional funding and support is absolutely necessary for large scale and monumental street art projects, we cannot ignore graffiti and must make room to include the subculture in municipal programs. Currently there are few municipalities which provide resources and space for graffiti art events, exhibits, or festivals beyond preventative programs. Montreal is much more progressive that other municipalities, however, across Canada and the United States there can be more done by city governments to connect to local subcultures. At the same time purists and muralists in the community need to be more open to working with and providing room for each other in the city. Pure antagonism does not allow for progress because it cannot accept the other as adversary.

As discussed in chapter 3 formal systems of aesthetic management can alienate artists from their art, the projects they participate in, and the greater discussions that they and their art can be a part of just as much as purist attitudes can alienate others from wanting to engage with the graffiti subculture. Engaging with or making room for informal urban arts cadres can improve the success of mural arts projects and help to manage antagonisms between graffiti and street artists. This also means that institutions and sponsors need to provide room for both purist and muralist attitudes which drive these arts communities and mural projects, and not uplift one at the cost of the other. Conversely, purists and muralists need to be more open to working with one another and with institutional partners if they wish to see greater success in their projects.

Third, graffiti and street art muralists need to continue r*eproducing and reinventing the tools of engagement*, that is, they must develop these repertoires of knowledge and practice, and pass them on to the next generations of artists. Chapter two discussed how a decline in mentoring in graffiti has affected the reproduction of subcultural values and practices. The reinvigoration of mentoring in the graffiti subculture would help to improve this issue and it could help to reduce the antagonisms between artists by giving younger generations an added appreciations for graffiti and street art muralism. As well, street art muralists need to take on the responsibility of passing on their repertoires of practice and knowledge to the younger generation of artists. They need to mentor them and show them how to organize, raise funds, and work with institutions and communities in collaborative ways that empower both the artists and the people to create lasting social change. This is an important role for artistic cadres like A'Shop, En Masse, Art Gang, and MU on both a commercial and social level to use their repertoires of practice and knowledge to empower newer generations of graffiti and street art muralists. Indeed, they already have taken on this task to some degree, some more than others, with the training of new members, however, it needs to be more than just their own cadres. That is, on some level cadres need to dispense with the competition with each other and think about how their work and contributions can help to build stronger networks and programs of practice that following generations can build upon. Moreover, mentorship needs to be more than just individually oriented, that is, these repertoires need to be applied at the community level as well, to help bring people together in appreciation of not just the aesthetics but each other. Cadres can show people how they can organise mural projects in their own communities which respond to their own particular needs.

Finally, I offer some suggestions for how street art muralism can be used to amplify and elevate radical democratic practices by

raising awareness and bringing people together. The success of this hinges on the commitment of artists and organisers to their projects and the communities they come together for. They need to stand up for their art, take risks, and use their platforms to create meaningful dialogue on important subjects that affect communities. Ultimately, we can learn a great deal from our current muralists, the projects that they are both a part of and create, as well as the social cultural, and political controversies and contradictions which emerge from them.

The Continuing Controversy over New Deal Art (And Why Defending it Matters)

The Mexican and American muralists of the early 20th century used their art courageously to confront institutionalized racism, historical white washing, political corruption, and the false promises of capitalism while standing for workers' rights, fair representation, freedom of speech and expression. We can neither ignore the lasting impacts that the early muralists had in defining this genre of public art in North America nor their contributions to current social, cultural, and political discussions. With the current climate of protest and indignation in the North America to continuing systems of social, cultural, economic, legal, and political oppression, there have been calls to have some of these murals removed or destroyed. Several murals in Chicago area schools and a series of murals at George Washington High School in San Francisco have since been removed or covered from public view after school administrations heard arguments by community groups who consider the content and depictions of people of color as outdated, uncomfortable, and offensive.

In 1995 two murals by Mildred Waltrip in 1938, *World Map and People* and *American Characters*, were removed from Hatch Elementary School in Oak Park Chicago because they depicted Africans with swollen red lips, dressed in loincloths, and holding spears. Waltrip had intended to honor all indigenous people with *World Map and People,* however, many of the depictions are now considered to be stereotypical and inappropriate. *American Characters* was similarly meant to pay respects to and reflect on the many different types of workers across American industries throughout history such as those in construction, mining, and farming, but parents complained to the school that the depictions of Black people as slaves in some of the panels were offensive and needed to be removed.[264]

In the summer of 2019, three murals were removed from elementary and middles Schools in Chicago after complaints from students and parents were received by school administrators regarding offensive depictions of Black and Indigenous characters or the lack of diversity in the paintings. Two murals painted by Ethel

Spears in 1937 which depict children playing outdoors *Child and Sports –Winter* and *Child and Sports – Summer* were removed from Middle Schools in Oak Park Village and placed in climate controlled storage.[265] Students from the social justice club at Percy Julian Middle School (PJMS) argued that *Child and Sports –Winter* was exclusionary for only depicting white children and was not reflective of the school's diverse student population. The students wanted to have the mural removed and placed in a museum but after backlash came from some teachers and others students and the media leading to a decision to move the mural into a climate controlled storage room at Oak Park Elementary School. *Child and Sports –Summer* was also removed that from Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School the same year after students following the lead of PJMS also complained about the lack of racial representation. In solidarity with PJMS the school's administration decided to have it placed in the same storage room at Oak Park Elementary School where it the two panels were finally rejoined after so many years.

A third mural at Horace Mann Elementary, *Community Life of Oak Park in the 19th Century,* by Emmanuel Jacobson and Ralf Henricksen (1936), also came under scrutiny for content that was deemed controversial. The mural shows an everyday 19th century scene with some people walking and sledding outside with others indoors gathered around a wood stove for warmth, while an indigenous woman stands alone in the cold. Administrators felt that it reflected segregationist policies in its depictions of indigenous persons and voted to have the mural covered with wood paneling since it was a fresco painted directly into the wall.

That same year, controversy was raised over a 13 panel New Deal era mural by Victor Arnautoff, *The Life of Washington*, at Thomas Jefferson High School San Francisco. The high school also has murals by WPA artists Ralph Stackpole and Lucien Labaudt in the library but it is Arnautoff's series that has attracted the most vociferous opposition from student and community groups. Some students and parents made complaints that depictions of slaves on Washington's plantation *(fig. I)* and pale frontiersmen walking that the body of a dead indigenous person *(fig. II)* in two of the panels were traumatizing and created a hostile learning environment for students of color. Students and parents argued that there are alternative ways to learn history which may not be so offensive and that they would like them to be painted over or removed. In April 2019 the Reflection and Action Group, a special committee convened to deliberate over the fate of the mural, voted

overwhelmingly in favor to paint over the murals at a cost of around $600,000 to taxpayers. After public outcry and criticism voiced by the local NAACP as well as a number of prominent San Franciscan artists and academics,[266] the board held another meeting and voted 4-3 not to paint over the mural but instead to cover it up permanently

Figure I: *Life of Washington*, Mount Vernon panel. Victor Arnautoff. 1936. Federal Arts Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Photo by Richard Evans.

with panels. The panels would then be painted or covered with materials that will depict people of color heroically battling against racism and poverty, a proposal supported by Steven Cook, President of the board. This measure to cover the murals will apparently still cost thousands of dollars.[267] In July that year over 400 academics and artists, including Judith Butler and David Harvey, signed an open letter on Nonsite.org condemning the decision to conceal the mural.[268] The George Washington alumni association also filed a lawsuit against the school board to leave the murals uncovered so that they can be available for public viewings and used as teaching tool for future students.[269]

This is not the first time that that these murals have come under fire for having controversial or offensive content. In the mid-1960s students and community members, many of whom were Black Panthers, protested to have the murals removed or destroyed citing them as racist and dehumanizing. When the school board failed to act on their demands to have the murals painted over by a professional African American artist, students splashed ink on several of them. The school board quickly reacted by authorizing a set of response murals to be painted in the entrance way and corridors by a young local African American artist named Dewey Crumpler. As he was only 19 years old at the time, the school board had raised concerns as to his skill and capacity to complete a mural of that scale.

Before Crumpler began painting, he traveled to Mexico to learn about the arts of mural making from renowned artists Pablo O'Higgins and David Siqueiros, both of whom had known and worked with Arnautoff some thirty years prior. From these great muralists Crumpler learned about the functionality of murals, how to break down sets of imagery to form narratives, and how to relate the work to the surrounding architecture. Siqueiros took him around

Mexico City to see the murals that he and his fellow artists had completed under the post-revolutionary programs. When he returned to the United States he had a much deeper appreciation for the value and purpose of the mural arts and that they were meant to be more

Figure II: *Life of Washington*, Westward Expansion panel. Victor Arnautoff. 1936. Federal Arts Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Photo by Richard Evans.

than simply pictures on walls. Crumpler understood that Arnautoff's murals at the high school were not celebrating George Washington as a slave owner or as the architect of westward expansion, they were making a critical statement about the founding President's complicity with institutional racism and state sanctioned violence against Black and Indigenous people. Arnautoff's intention was to expose the white washing of Washington by showing that he owned slaves and that the expansion of America across the continent came at great cost of indigenous lives and culture. The scene of Washington standing over the body of a dead Native American man, pointing westward over him as the ghostly specter of frontiersmen march onward is a critical comment on both the concept and cost of manifest destiny. His murals provide a raw interpretation of an historical record that has for the most part downplayed these truths while promoting Washington as an honest and heroic figure.

From preparation to dedication Crumpler's mural, a triptych called *Multi-Ethnic Heritage (fig. III),* would take nearly 8 years to complete. One of the main reasons why it took him so long was the need to satisfy the concerns and expectations of student and community groups as well as the school board. He spent a great deal of time researching his material and attending dozens of meetings seeking approval and support for his illustrations and designs. There were arguments over who should be included in the murals, what he should be allowed to paint, that he should not be painting any Indigenous or Asian characters or that it should only portray Black people and culture. He pushed to have the mural represent all Third World people and that the panels would have to be united in some manner to show unity among the people. Crumpler's final designs for the panels included proud and dignified Indigenous, African-American, and Latino kings, academics, spiritual leaders, and elders.

Historical and revolutionary characters such as Hugo Chavez, Malcolm X, Simon Bolivar, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Delores Huerta. The focus of the response murals was the struggle of people of color throughout American history so they are represented as

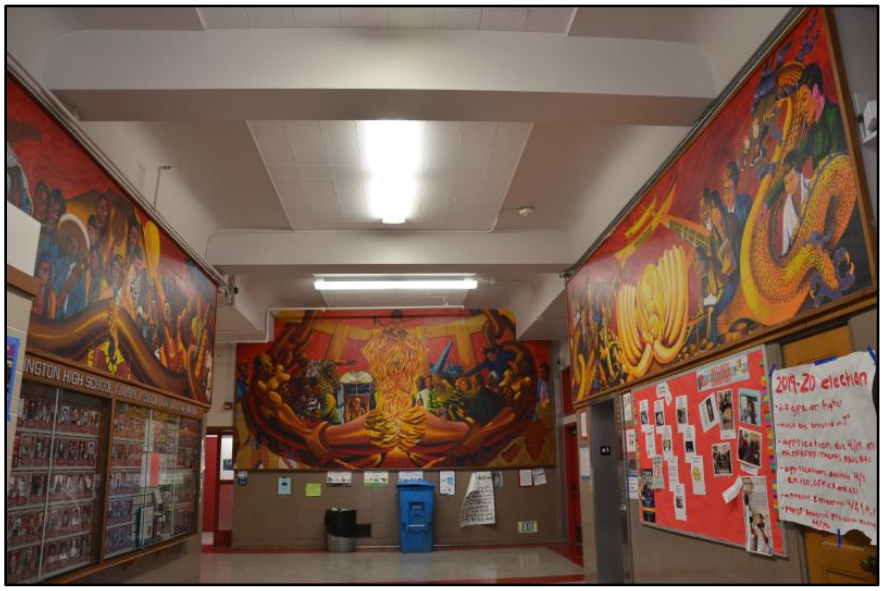

Figure III: *Multi-Ethnic Heritage*, Dewey Crumpler. George Washington High school, San Francisco, CA. 1974. Photo by Tammy Aramian.

standing together in each of the panels, surrounded by cultural imagery such as continental Africa, Hieroglyphs, an eagle, ancient pyramids and temples, and a legendary Loong, or mythological Chinese dragon. Interconnecting all three panels are the chains of oppression which are shown to be broken by their strength and determination.

The central figure of the African American panel is a woman ablaze, phoenix-like, melting the chains while hoisting a child into the sky, representing hope and the future. The powerful arms of two African American men pull at the chains of bondage breaking them apart *(fig. IV)*. Two children form into the yin and yang symbol in the centre of the Asian panel which also included Ruth Asawa, a local Asian American sculptor and artist, friend of Crumpler and one of his supporters on the commission *(fig. V)*. The Latin and Native American panel shows an elder Navajo teaching a younger tribe member about his culture and history and a man holding up the island of Alcatraz, a symbol of indigenous efforts to reclaim their land through a 19 month long protest from 1969-71 *(fig. VI)*. Crumpler's mural panels were installed in the corridor adjacent to the high school's main entrance and vestibule area where Arnautoff's murals are located. In applying what he had learned from his time in Mexico with Higgins and Siqueiros, Crumpler wanted to design the triptych in relationship to how students and others would move through the space so that they could fully appreciate the

historical and cultural elements that he had included in response to Arnautoff's work. Symbolically his murals were meant to convey the strength, vitality and the important influences that Blacks, Asians, and Latinos have had on American culture and politics.

Figure IV*: Multi-Ethnic Heritage*, African-American panel, Dewey Crumpler. George Washington High school, San Francisco, CA. 1974. Photo by Amanda Law.

Crumpler believes that appreciating the importance of artistic symbolism is something that the current generation has lost due to a general lack of education to the value of muralism as a public art. As a result, many view the imagery in these murals as being literal which has drawn indignation and calls for their destruction or removal by some students, parents, and community groups. Although he supports their political inclinations to protest and make their voices heard, he thinks that they are misguided. In February 2020, on George Washington's birthday, a panel of nine speakers, including Crumpler, were organized by the Alumni association to speak in defense of keeping the murals and not covering them up. The panelists argued that the murals were masterpieces, reminders of the important roles that WPA artists, like Arnautoff and the other muralists with works in George Washington High, played in providing alternative historical perspectives and social critique through their art. Crumpler made an impassioned plea for the murals to be left uncovered imploring committee members and the public not to run away from or try to change history, but to confront and learn from it.[270]

Censoring this mural also censors that historical voice of critique. It simply misses the point of the mural and Arnautoff's activist work throughout his career as well as the historical context of leftist muralism at the time. These New Deal Era murals existed to teach and show how an historical America had been sanitized by the moral enterprising of societal and political elites. The discomfort and unease that that some of these murals invoke in audiences, even still today, is an integral element of what makes them important to the preservation of an honest and genuine representation of history.

It is also integral to processes of social and cultural change in society because if were only allowed to see non-confrontational or uncontroversial scenes without any context then we might be less inclined or encouraged to question the status quo. Arnautoff and the other muralists of the New Deal Era attempted to give the people a vision of America uninhibited by elitist constructions of history and culture.

Arnautoff was an American Russian and a professed socialist. Many of his other mural works were heavily critical of American history, culture and politics. He studied under Rivera for two years from 1929-1931 and then began producing his own socially engaged murals when he returned to San Francisco. In 1933-34 he was involved in the Coit Tower mural controversy which further radicalized his socialist political leanings but also his desire to use his art as a form of social critique. His murals at George Washington high school several years after this show his continued passion to

Figure V: *Multi-Ethnic Heritage*, Asian panel, Dewey Crumpler. George Washington High school, San Francisco, CA. 1974. Photo by Dewey Crumpler.

pursue activist work though his art. It is important to acknowledge the contributions that Arnautoff and other New Deal Era muralists had to social and political activism in the United States. These artists were brave enough to confront the status quo and gave voice to the labor movement, even when their lives were threatened for doing so. Artists such as Arnautoff should not be censored or demonized but celebrated and remembered for their courage and resolve in standing against oppression and the white washing of history. Preserving their mural works is an important step to ensuring that future generations can appreciate artistic symbolism and benefit from both the perspectives of the artists as well as the historical debates which surround them.

It is in this sense that I speak about the value of permanence in muralism and why it needs to be reinstilled in the current generation of street art muralists. The great muralists were serious painters not just because of their historical context of their lives and commissions but also because the work was expected to remain in place indefinitely. Their frescos were literally cemented into the walls of state institutions so the Mexican and New Deal Artists knew that any reflections or counter narratives they made needed to be meaningful and serious. Certainly the difference in location is something to take

into account, with the early muralists having painted almost entirely indoors and with methods and materials that were meant to permanently install their works. Street art muralists paint almost entirely outdoors and use inferior materials that are not expected to last more than a few years. The New Deal murals were also playful and facetious, poking fun at popular figures and ideologies. These jabs, however, were not just done in jest and the punchlines were meant to be severe, offering unapologetic perspectives on historical characters and events. There are still serious murals, indeed this dissertation has discussed a number of them, however, the climate of social and political divisiveness and contempt between the left and the right discourages many from pursuing more controversial subjects. The materials, conditions and circumstances may not be the same but we should still work to preserve or create meaningful monumental works of muralism in public that do more than simply beautify the urban environment.

Figure VI: *Multi-Ethnic Heritage*, Latin/Native American panel, Dewey Crumpler. George Washington High school, San Francisco, CA. 1974. Photo by Dewey Crumpler.

The less that the permanence of murals is valued the greater the expectation is that they are not meant to last. Murals are as ephemeral as advertisements today, there one day and gone the next, with most street art murals repainted for the next event or within several years of being produced. Artists also have limited time to complete their murals so many are less interested or encouraged to commit to painting something more meaningful or complex. Why should an artist paint something profound or put more effort into the content if they are working with inferior materials and will be repainted within a few years? Knowing this, artists are less serious about the content of their work than where the art is taking them and how muralism can help them achieve their personal goals rather than thinking about how muralism can help to expand public perception or provide alternative narratives. Street art murals are not imagined as being permanent, even if they last a few years.

With the diminishment of permanence in muralism then, we lose an important means to communicate memories and values over generations. Muralism needs to not just inspire us to think critically, it should also be used to help us to remember. When permanence and seriousness are removed from muralism it makes it easier to erase, repaint, and forget about them. It also takes away from the gravity

and importance of the content or perspective and replaces it with the seriousness of production. Organizing a mural project and executing it become serious business and the focus of attention, while the content of the mural becomes something to be appreciated purely on an aesthetic level. So long as what is being painted does not upset anyone, especially the property owners and event organisers, then it is business as usual. The lack of seriousness surrounding muralism also makes it more playful and the experience of it immediate which removes the important function of muralism has a public art to inspire audiences and challenge them to think more critically. Instead, many murals just mimic brand placement and are used as the backdrop to events centred on hedonistic consumption. Preserving new deal murals then also means preserving some sense of purpose behind painting them.

Ultimately the decision to cover Arnautoff's murals in George Washington high school –a place where critical thinking should be encouraged –is a symptom of the continued inflexibility of neoliberal culture to any opposing opinions or perspectives. Social and political terrains remain highly divisive in our communities and those who stand against popular opinion continue to be demonized and framed as morally corrupt. Censoring these murals takes away yet another symbolic space for counter hegemonic activism and critique. Indeed, these murals may make us feel uncomfortable and the contradictions they present may have us questioning our historical and cultural perspectives, realities, and supposed truths, but this is what they were intended for by the artists. These murals were intentionally made to be controversial; they were meant to be symbolic of the struggles against racism, oppression and elitism. Covering, removing, or destroying them is not the answer. It only censors or denies the possibility of a response to them and wider public discussion about the important issues they raise.

Muralism and the Right to the City

The arguments and discussions surrounding muralism –graffiti, street art or traditional in form –throughout this dissertation are essentially debates regarding our collective right to co-create the city in our own image. As Harvey describes it, the right to the city is part of a larger movement to creatively reclaim the city from the commoditizing grip of capitalism. It is also the right to be included in the history of the city and to be fairly represented. This right to the city, however, must be collectively realized if it is to truly renew access to urban life.[271] Although mural projects involve the combined efforts of artists, volunteers, organisers, administrators, property owners, politicians, and community members, they may not serve their greater interests or those of the communities where they are painted. Municipal mural programs over emphasize urban

branding strategies and encourage the development of creative industries which focus on economic over social outcomes. As it was discussed in the third chapter, these strategies are largely in place to build an arts infrastructure that is geared towards consumption and spectacle oriented events. Festivals are not co-creative, they are co-consumptive. The production of murals is consumed by passive audiences, drawn to inner city locations where they are offered designer drinks, food, and clothing. Graffiti and street art muralism have largely been activated as cultural goods to regenerate inner city neighborhoods and magnetize them to draw in people and boost local commerce and tourism industries.

Economies of muralism can offer great opportunities for streets based artists to build professional arts careers and develop their urban arts skill sets. At the same time entrepreneurial forms of governance and economic development central to urban branding and boosterism projects continue to manage, control, standardize, and commodify informal and illicit streets based arts. As important as a healthy local economy is for the life and operation of municipalities, they also need to encourage events that provide a co-creative environment. Incorporating both graffiti and street art is an important part of creating a more inclusive environment but we should also be using mural arts to magnetize us and to bring us together for positive outcomes. Urban arts festivals can be used to amplify creative capacities and elevate people to want to create things in their neighborhoods.

As it has been strongly suggested in this research, municipal programs need to make more room for graffiti art in formal festivals and events, as well as encourage informal urban arts cadres to participate both as artists and organisers. Stakeholders in these subcultures and street art communities have as much to offer economies of muralism as the larger players. We also need to acknowledge their contributions and listen to their voices when they raise concerns about the importance of subcultural values. By doing so we retain difference and diversity of style and form as well as perspectives and memory which are integral to a healthy culture of public art in our societies. Doing so also supports and nurtures counter hegemonic practices and critical artistic interventions.

Formal systems of aesthetic management, like mural arts and prevention programs, can alienate artists from their art. For many muralists the art becomes laborious and focused almost entirely on production. Short schedules (several days to a week) coupled with event or festival migration also leaves little time to interact with local communities. Artists are so wrapped up in painting that they are unable to really connect with anyone around them more substantially besides to generate more work. Municipal and event guidelines, influenced by sponsorship dollars, advise artists not to paint

controversial or shocking content, awarding those who conform to the status quo with more opportunities to paint and exhibit their work while penalizing those who do not by excluding them from arts events or any opportunities to work with formal urban art cadres. The danger here is that audiences come to expect this sort of sponsor context for muralism, or public art more generally, and artists start to see their opportunities and successes as tied to sponsorship dollars. This can result in the serial reproduction of noncontroversial, unprovocative public art.

Purist attitudes and the aggressive bombing of street art murals by writers can also alienate artists and community members, namely street artists but also younger graffiti artists, from wanting to engage in graffiti or street art muralism. This was seen with Phillipe Mastracola and Jason Botkin who do not wish to paint in Montreal any longer due to these antagonistic attitudes or with Rizek who finds his inspiration in formal cadres like A'Shop rather than established writers in the subculture. If purists and muralists were able to be more open to collaborating with each other then perhaps these antagonisms could be reduced, though this is also dependent on institutions providing more space for both groups. One way to do this would be to include more established graffiti artists in urban arts festivals so that younger members of the subculture could have more positive examples of graffiti art. As well, efforts could be made to connect these established graffiti artists with younger writers at these events or through municipal programs that encourage mentor relationships. This could help to build more constructive relations between graffiti and street artists as well as train more local informal artistic talent for professional applications at the civic or commercial levels.

One of the main arguments that Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) put forward was that capitalism has been redeployed to use networking and authenticity as a means to recuperate its losses to contemporary expressions of artistic critique. As much as this may be true, I have witnessed graffiti and street artists establish a measure of resistance to these redeployments in their push for greater autonomy. Namely they have accomplished this through a commitment to practicing more inclusive business and organization strategies but also by partnering with institutions and private sponsors for larger mural projects. As Fluke has said before, '*you do what you need to so that you can do what you want to*.' By establishing themselves creative hubs urban arts cadres like A'Shop, Arts Gang, and 123Klan both embrace and resist new codifications of commoditization. That is, they accept some level of commoditization of authenticity and liberation which allows them to extend networks for themselves and others and in doing so create more opportunities for success. They play the game so to speak but

much like else in the subculture, they appropriate it and make it their own, hybridizing formal and informal attitudes and approaches. Migrating from purist to muralist attitudes does not necessarily mean that artists have fully abandoned their subcultural connections or values, as was shown with Fluke and the other artists from A'Shop. As with many things cultural, purist and muralist mindsets appear to co-exist with the more successful artists taking the best of both worlds and making it work for them how they can.

Reproducing and Reinventing the Tools of Engagement

In the first chapter, I reviewed how the Mexican muralists played a pivotal role in establishing both the philosophical and artistic tools that would go on to be adopted and later modified by American artists well into the later parts of the 20th century. All three of the Mexican muralists had lasting impacts that are still being felt today, but it was Rivera and Siqueiros that I believe had the greatest influence on American mural arts and culture in terms of passing on repertoires of knowledge and practice. As discussed above, Victor Arnautoff's mural panels in George Washington High School were the focal point of intense community discussion at least twice since they were originally painted. The first time in the 1960s and then again in 2019 members of the San Francisco community fiercely debated the content and purpose of the murals. Dewey Crumpler's response mural was a direct result of these debates in the 1960s which again came to be centre stage in the defense of Arnautoff's murals in 2019. Arnautoff studied with Rivera in the 1920s and Crumpler studied under Siqueiros in the 1960s. Both artists were immensely influenced by their techniques and philosophies which came to bear on their works in America. Mark Rogovin also painted with and studied under Siqueiros in the mid-1960s which instilled in him the critical importance of muralism as a public art and eventuated his meeting fellow artists and activists Walker and Eda. Both Rogovin and Crumpler would also go on to communicate the value of muralism as a public art through their publications and teaching.[272] While these are several of the more notable legacies of the Mexican muralists influence on American mural arts, they inspired countless other artists with their ideas, approaches and techniques. The repertoires of knowledge and practice that they imparted to American artists and those beyond continue to have deep and lasting influences on artists and organisers today. The *Water is One* mural project produced by Nueve Arte Urbano and Pangea Seed in Mexico in 2018 took its inspiration directly from Siqueiros' *Appeal to Plastic Artists in Argentina* manifesto from 1933. Indeed, the manifesto for the Mextonia events echoed those written by the great muralists calling for the re-valorization of monumental public

art celebrating indigenous histories and cultures. It also called for artists to find a higher purpose in muralism and to use their talents to enlighten and inspire others to make the world a better place. The cross cultural impacts between the events in Mexico and Estonia are still yet to be fully realized and will likely bear more fruit in the years to come as these artists go on to participate and organize their own festivals and projects. In doing so, repertoires will be adapted and new knowledge will be created between artists, cultural workers, activists, and the communities they connect with.

Repertoires of practice and knowledge are also passed on through mentoring. In the second chapter it was discussed how mentoring in the graffiti subculture has been an important part of how established writers and artists transmit knowledge, practice and values to younger generations. Mentoring is essential to the transmission of values, tools, techniques, and history to new generations in the graffiti subculture. It also helps to structure relations between new and established writers and artists in the community by limiting new recruits to those in geographical and social proximity to each other. By painting with established writers on graffiti productions or murals novices learn the techniques of spray painting –can control, fading, drips, lettering styles and forms –as well as social etiquette when interacting with other artists, patrons, and the public. In these ways mentoring has historically helped to balance the purist tendencies in younger writers by teaching them the value of working and collaborating with others in the subculture and arts communities. Although mentoring has declined in the subculture in recent years, there are still established writers and artists who take on apprentices or protégés, like Axe has done with Awe. There remain only few of these relationships where once there were dozens, and the gap between older and younger writers and artists only gets wider every year. So much so that younger bombers have been crossing out legacy murals by Kings just to gain clout among their peers, showing little to no remorse for their actions or respect for those established writers they attack, whom they accuse of selling out. It is increasingly difficult for the older generation of writers to connect with the younger ones because of this antagonism. Newer forms of mentoring among younger generations of writers seems to be focused almost entirely on bombing (graffiti vandalism), and the pursuit of a lifestyle of risk and infamy, with the finer aspects of graffiti art given little to no attention.

Even though mentoring at the informal level of the subculture between established writers and novices has declined, I argue that it has the opportunity to be renewed among professional graffiti crews such as A'Shop and 123Klan, as well as Arts Nuevo. A'Shop and 123 Klan are doing well to elevate artists in the subculture and local

arts communities by inviting them to participate in projects and providing workspaces to help grow their artistic skills and techniques. In these ways they provide opportunities for new and developing artists to interact with the public, patrons and clients, gain work experience, and learn important networking skills. Edgar Sanchez has mentored and graffiti writers and artists in Mexico for years, including the artists connected to Pangea and Mextonia through his role as an organiser and paint supplier. Jason Botkin's relationship with Edgar over the last several years and mural projects helped to grow his appreciation for the role that muralism can play as the visual expression of environmental and indigenous activist projects. In working with Edgar on several largescale mural projects, Jason learned how to better utilize artistic symbolism and direct his ideas and those of others into narrative frames. Edgar also helped Jason to gain greater understanding on how to organise and manage large-scale mural arts projects, including how to deal with any tensions or logistical problems that may arise between participants. Although Jason got burned out by his experiences with PangeaSeed, I think that the values and lessons he took back with him from these events inspired him to seriously pursue socially engaged mural and arts projects with indigenous groups and will continue to influence his work for years to come.

Other formal arts cadres like MU and LNDMRK who work more with street artists have also extended their networks to help elevate other artists in their communities, however, these cadres' only offer opportunities for artists to paint for their projects or events. As discussed, some of the artists do feel a greater sense of pride and purpose through their participation, however, there is little more done to build upon relationships beyond these events or projects. Everything that happens is self-contained so participants who wish to apply themselves more must do so on their own time and money if they wish to create new knowledge or adopt best practices.

Ultimately formal urban arts cadres need to expand their roles as mentors and leaders, especially with the upcoming generations of graffiti and street artists. If formal cadres could effectively transmit knowledge and practice through programs of mentorship between established and experienced artists and organisers then they might be able to better empower them to co-create and produce events that allow for more locals, even the public, to collaborate in the mural arts projects. Additionally, by taking a more expansive role in training and mentoring local graffiti and street artists, formal urban arts cadres could also help in mitigating antagonisms between these communities. In stepping up to take more of a leadership role, formal urban arts cadres could help local writers, artists, and others achieve similar levels of autonomy and success through their art.

Given the current crisis of democracy that we are facing (Mouffe 2018), art manifestos that address wider social and political issues could have an important role to play in encouraging creative resistance against neoliberal hegemony. Manifestos can provide direction and coherence to democratic struggles and resistances. The art that they inspire can bring artists and organisers together, rally creative resistance and direct it towards specific goals. Manifestos can also help to strengthen chains of equivalency among different democratic struggles bringing groups together which in turn helps to articulate demands and claims for rights and the redress of injustices. Moreover, manifestos that promote modes of practice and resistance which engender counter hegemonic lifestyles and worldviews can also provide a basis to challenge the core values of the present neoliberal model. In doing so, arts manifestos help to restore and deepen the important democratic values of equality, compassion, tolerance, autonomy, and security that have largely been co-opted by the powers of capital. By encouraging social and political engagement, arts manifestos stimulate critical thinking, elevating people's awareness to important issues and amplifying their will to participate in democratic activities, processes, and debates.

Cultural and artistic practices, such as those located in graffiti and street art, are an important part of this process because they can help to inscribe affect, articulate demands and claims to rights, and the creation of a collective will. If the intention is to improve democracy and to radicalize participation then graffiti and street art muralism can provide a big way to make that happen by fostering the multiplication of agonistic public spaces where the voices and visions that the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate can be made visible.

Graffiti and street art muralism can also be an effective means to redirect people's passions towards more productive social and political goals and projects which encourage democratic participation. Confrontation, debate, and opposition are integral to a well-functioning democracy and if these cannot be mobilized by traditional democratic processes because consensus is privileged over disagreement then we may be in more danger than we realize. The seemingly unresolvable antagonism of graffiti is a direct result of the systemic dispossession and dislocation of the subculture in North American cities through economies of muralism. The inability of neo-management models to mobilize the antagonistic passions of graffiti writers and artists reveals how terribly ill equipped they are at being able to meet this challenge.

Saying something with your art has always been a risk. In the opening chapter it was discussed how muralists were demonized, marginalized, harassed, attacked, vilified, and discriminated against by the government and the public for critiquing capitalism. Some

were even denied opportunities for work and citizenship because of their art and political views. Today it seems that many artists are not willing to take the same risks or commit to sustained protest for fear of being ostracised and passed over for work. Artists are still resisting and critiquing but they are not unified under any banner or collective social or political identity. If critique is to regain its momentum then artists need to be more actively challenging the prerequisites of mobility and flexibility by slowing down the pace of their connections and deferring engagement in new mural projects. Doing so could provide them a measure of clarity by humanizing their relations and slowing down their project-to-project lifestyles. Many are burning out and are left with little time to recuperate their own personal physical and mental health.

One way that these conditions could be improved would be for artists and organisers to come together as a collective, guild, or even a union so that they could present a more united front. Formalising an organisation of muralists and artists would position stakeholders in the graffiti subculture and street art community more seriously vis-à-vis property owners, municipal mural arts programs and business improvement associations. Doing so could provide artists and organisers more of a voice in deciding where and how municipal arts programs allocate resources for local arts education and initiatives, including socially or culturally oriented mural arts projects. It could also provide representation for artists concerning work related issues, grievances, or disputes. If there are contractual concerns then artists could seek consultation with a local arts representative who could advise them or their rights or a best course of action.

Here again, the formal urban arts cadres like those discussed in this dissertation –En Masse, A'Shop, 123Klan, LNDMRK, MU, and Arts Nuevo –can offer valuable guidance and leadership. These arts cadres are already well positioned to be representatives for the graffiti subculture and street art community but they are still working in competition against each other and only collaborating when project goals demand. Mural projects are increasingly planned in secret as cadres grow distrustful of one another and struggle to secure funding from limited municipal budgets for the arts. The tensions between MU and LNDMRK as well as between the artists surrounding the two commemorative murals for Leonard Cohen in 2017 show how this can cause divisions between these cadres, limit the possibilities for collective solutions, and misallocate public arts funds which could otherwise be directed to other projects.

Urban arts cadres could still remain competitive while also forming a collective organization that provides for these important representative functions. By doing so they could better identify potential leadership and management candidates from the graffiti

and street art communities to grow their numbers and better plan for the future of their respective cadres. Although this dissertation was not able to more fully articulate the potential value of mural arts unions to agonistic political struggles, it can be an important area for future research and in my opinion warrants further study.

Finally, it is up to the current generation of artists and activists to figure out a way to regain a collective voice while dealing with the competing hegemonies of state and corporations, as well as those of the graffiti and street art communities. It is not an easy task and it cannot be completed by any one individual or group but instead demands a manner and mode by which they can engage with each other in a meaningful way to work towards compromises and solutions. The new terrain for critique is much more vulnerable than its predecessor and demands more work to keep it together by its participating and collaborating members. Artists and organisers need to stand up and make themselves heard, no different than *Los Tres Grandes*, Arnautoff, and the civil rights muralists. Indeed, we all need to find the courage to stand for social and political causes that are bigger than us or support those who are willing to take the risks when we cannot. Ultimately, we need to be willing to pay the price for these challenges and interventions to make the difference we hope to see in the world, otherwise we will continue to see the paradox of our existence as holding us back, rather than truly being the condition of its possibility.

End notes

Chapter I

[1] Mouffe 2005: 153
[2] Scott 1990, Foucault 1991, Boltanski 2011, Mouffe 2005, 2014
[3] *There* were nine artists selected by Jules Guerin to paint the thirty-five murals for the exhibition: Milton Bancroft, Frank Brangwyn, William de Leftwich Dodge, Frank Vincent Du Mond, Childe Hassam, Charles Holloway, Arthur F. Matthews, Robert Reid, and Edward Simmons. Hassam, Du Mond, Matthews, and Reid also had a number of works on display in the Fine Arts Palace. [*Lumbard James 1915, Ackley in Ganz 2015]*
[4] Ganz 2015
[5] The Palace of Fine Arts housed approximately 11 thousand of these pieces, representing fourteen countries (Argentina, Cuba, China, France, Italy, Finland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Philippine Islands, Portugal, Sweden and Uruguay) with the majority being from the United States. J.E.D. Trask, who headed the Fine Arts Exhibition Department, traveled across Europe and Asia between 1912 and 1914 to set up committee meetings and secure art works from these participating countries. He returned to San Francisco because of the outbreak of the First World War in Europe. (https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/ppie-palaces.htm)
[6] Ackley 2015, Placzek 2015
[7] According to Panama Canal Authority (https://www.pancanal.com) an estimated 22 thousand workers died during the French period. The full number may never be known as the French authorities only recorded deaths which occurred at hospitals and not the workplace. Hospital records show 4,500 West Indian workers died of diseases and accidents during the U.S. construction period compared to a total of 350 white Americans.
[8] San Francisco marked the centennial celebrations of the PPIE beginning in February 2015 with yearlong exhibits, performances, and events though out the city. Again, and to no surprise, the centennial was a huge success attracting interested visitors from the city and beyond, bringing millions of dollars through tourism and investors. William de Leftwich Dodge's mural Atlantic and Pacific, like many of the murals exhibited in the original exposition, had been stored away for nearly the last century. Conservators spent months preparing and restoring the mural after it had been relocated, where it was installed once more for public viewing in the de Young Museum in San Francisco for the centennial. Though again, it seems upon a review of the comments off of the Facebook page for the mural's re-installation that, again, the fuller appreciation of what Dodge's mural was communicating has been lost on the audience. All of comments refer to its aesthetic or some form of artificial nostalgia imagining what it must have been like to see it in the Tower of Jewels originally, completely ignoring the Eurocentric depictions of the characters.
[9] Lee 1999, Ackley, in Ganz 2015. There were a number of publications meant to celebrate and describe the exhibition as a whole, though none were as opinionated as *The Sculpture and Mural Decorations of the Exposition* by Stirling Calder (1915), an art teacher and sculptor. Out of a thirteen page introduction, Calder leaves only the last two pages to discussing the murals of the Exposition. He provides generally positive reviews of the sculptures in the exposition for most of the introduction. Both his explanations and descriptions of the murals, however, come off cursory and more criticising of the artists and their choices of color than with the sculptors he discusses earlier in the chapter. He notes that they are "unusual in their settings" in some of the courtyards where they are placed as banners outdoors (1915:11) Perhaps this had more to do with his son being a sculptor by trade than any general distaste for the artists or their murals. Overall the introduction this work comes off as more of an appeal to the critics. For a more thorough reading on all the arts featured at the exhibit including photographs of the murals and sculptures exhibited it is recommended to read The Art of the Exposition by Eugene Neuhaus, Univ. of California (1915) and Laura Ackley's *San Francisco's Jewel City: The Panama-Pacific International Exhibition of 1915,* Heyday Books (2014).
[10] Lee 1999: 21
[11] The cost of attending the 1915 exposition was 50 cents for a day pass per person, which, accounting for inflation would be about 15$ American today. Certainly not that expensive even by today's standards, but also not affordable to many San Franciscans in 1915. Unemployment was relatively high across the United States at 9.7 percent and the average pay for unionized workers was $21 to $25 dollars a week [*U. S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Union Scale of Wages and Hours of Labor*. May 1, 1915]. Most families were renting, living in crowded homes, and many were not unionized or working poorly paid jobs in substandard and demanding conditions. It is likely that most were not necessarily able to put $5 to $ 6 dollars (or more) to get the family in for the day to see the spectacle of the exposition without it taking away from the weekly living budget for food and lodgings.
[12] According to Marie Bolton and Nancy C. Unger (2010), on the eve of the disaster in 1906, most of the working class lived in small wooden framed buildings nearer the center of the city in crowded, run-down neighborhoods. These

neighborhoods were hit the hardest by the quake and fire. Chinatown, one of the most condensed neighborhoods which housed all of the Asian San Franciscan population in a 3 by 7 block area, was completely destroyed. Upwards of a quarter million San Franciscans were living without home or food in makeshift refugee camps scattered in parks surrounding the downtown area. Housing costs soared after the disaster reaching upwards of 350% and even by 1910 were still 71% higher than pre-disaster rates. Furthermore, after the disaster public health concerns erupted over lack of clean drinking water, broken sewage systems, and accumulating garbage which contributed to increased cases of typhoid, tuberculosis, and plague carried by rats. City officials took extreme measures to control these outbreaks including the forcibly demolishing working class neighborhoods, which just happened to be those with the greatest potential for property development. When San Francisco was awarded the contract to host the PPIE in 1911 these forced demolitions dramatically increased to make way for the exposition grounds. It was only the working class renters and cottage dwellers who had relocated to these areas who stood in the way of the exposition organisers plans for this redevelopment. Local business efforts to help with neighborhood reconstruction efforts were unable to match the vast sums of monies donated by corporate elites and eventually these tenants were pushed out of these neighborhoods. Some property owners and renters did resist, however, the combined fiscal and political might of the city council, corporate sponsors, and exposition organisers was far too great. Under the pretext of public health and safety these working class neighborhoods were forcibly emptied and razed to the ground. It can be imagined that these people, and the public more generally, were not entirely inclined to participate in the exposition event which took their homes and lives away.

[13] The Exposition was held from February 20th to December 4th 1915. This attendance number exceeded the expectations of the exposition managers of approximately 12 million visitors.

[14] Ackley 2014

[15] The first murals commissioned after the revolutionary war were for one of the oldest and most prestigious of schools in Mexico, the National Preparatory School, San Ildefonso College between 1923 and 1927. More murals were soon commissioned for a number of public buildings including the headquarters of the Secretariat of Public Education (1923-1928), the National Palace (1929-1935), and the Palace of Fine Arts (1934).

[16] Stein 1994:35

[17] Onians 2004

[18] Siqueiros had written the manifesto after his discussions with Rivera while they studied fresco in Italy together. He admitted that he would not have been able to formulate the basis of the manifesto without Rivera's insights. Stein (1994)

[19] *El Machete,* no.7, Mexico City. 1923.

[20] Stein 1994

[21] Orozco would not leave Mexico until 1927 after several years of struggling to make ends meet like many other artists during this period after the government discontinued its funding to those muralists who had supported El Machete. He apparently left Mexico 'in disgust' for New York to try his fortune there. (Stein 1994: 52)

[22] Stein 1994

[23] Upon their return to Mexico, Siqueiros continued his work with the labor movement and political activism while Rivera went back to painting murals in The National Palace in Mexico City and the Palace of Cortez in the city of Cuernavaca from 1929 until 1930.

[24] Siqueiros was imprisoned after being apprehended at a May Day parade just outside of the Uruguayan consulate where he had been in hiding after the PCM had been outlawed. He spent 6 months in the notorious Lecumberri Prison in Mexico City and was then exiled from the country the year following. He was imprisoned again from 1940-50 for his part in leading a failed assassination attempt on Leon Trotsky.

[25] Rivera's arrival in September of 1930 was delayed due to his affiliation with the Communist party until a number of wealthy and influential San Franciscans –notably the arts patron Albert Bender, the American ambassador to Mexico Dwight Morrow, the architect Timothy Pflueger, and the president of the San Francisco Art Institute William Gerstle –used their influence to secure his visit. He spent an intense three year period painting murals there, New York City, and in Detroit. Even before his arrival to the United States, Rivera's work was influencing American mural painters such as Ray Boynton, Ralph Stackpole, and Victor Arnautoff, who had travelled to Mexico to study his techniques. There was considerable interest by mural painters and dealers to acquire Rivera's preparatory sketches and drawings for his murals as well. The importation of a number of his sketches to San Francisco in 1926 helped to develop interest in his work. Even before his arrival critics traveled to Mexico in 1928 to observe and assess his works (Stein 1994, Lee 1999, and additional notes from the San Francisco Art Institute web site https://www.sfai.edu).

[26] Not overtly political in tone, even these murals made some viewers uncomfortable and drew criticism. In *Allegory of California* (1931), for instance, Rivera focused on agriculture and industry but he also took liberties in painting a female goddess as the central figure and again on the ceiling in another version outstretched, nude, and seemingly in

flight that offended some members from the religious community. Rivera did not make any explicit references to politics in this mural, but he did sign his name in red paint to the left of the painting on the tree stump which some indicated was emblematic of his political leanings.

[27] The Detroit Institute of Art murals (27 panels were installed as three murals on the North, South, and West walls in the Institute's interior court) painted by Rivera detailed the inner workings of a factory floor including numerous workers of different races heroically laboring side by side amid the industrial machinery. Members of Detroit's religious community were also critical of a nativity/laboratory scene in which a child was receiving a vaccination from several scientists, and the inclusion of several nude figures of different races painted above the main panels to represent the importance of human and material resources, which were deemed pornographic.

[28] Berman 1978

[29] Berman 1978: 62

[30] Berman 1978: 63

[31] *My Art, My Life: An Autobiography [by] Diego Rivera* (with Gladys March). New York: Citadel Press, 1960. Republished by Dover Publications, Inc. in 1991, p. 127

[32] The British painter Frank Brangwyn painted 4 murals in the south corridor meant to complement Sert's work, and were themed along man's search for eternal truth through the teachings of Christ. Brangwyn also came under criticism for his inclusion of the figure of Christ in a Commercial business building later in September of that year. It was suggested that he represent Christ symbolically with rays of light coming from the heavens. Instead he simply turned the figure around so that his back was facing the viewer making him just a faceless cloaked man. [*British Murals and Decorative Painting 1920-1960*, Sansom & Co. 2013.]

[33] *My Art, My Life: An Autobiography [by] Diego Rivera* (with Gladys March). New York: Citadel Press, 1960. Republished by Dover Publications, Inc. in 1991, p. 128

[34]*Rivera Defended by Artists' Group: Writers and Scientists to Be Asked to Join in Protest to Rockefeller. The New York Times. May 16, 1933.*

[35] The full poem is provided in the appendices accompanying this thesis work. Retrieved 4/1/2017 http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA04/hess/RockRivera/newspapers/NewYorker_05_20_1933.html

[36] *My Art, My Life: An Autobiography [by] Diego Rivera* (with Gladys March). New York: Citadel Press, 1960. Republished by Dover Publications, Inc. in 1991, p. 128

[37] The original title Rivera gave the mural was *The Marriage of the Artistic Expression of the North and of the South on this Continent.*

[38] Comprised of 10 sections arranged in 5 panels, measuring 7 by 23 meters, and completed live in front of a public audience as a spectacle event, it was the largest mural he ever painted in the United States. A narrative piece which emphasized the marriage of North and South American artistic expression, it depicts cultural and character elements unified around the central image of the great goddess of life, Coatlicue. The goddess is part stone and part machinery signifying the union of the industrious north and the traditional south. Importantly, both northern and southern artists work to complete the figure together, side by side, sharing both equipment and resources, unified and collectively accomplishing the great artistic project. On the left, Mexica cultures of the Olmec, Toltec, Maya, Mixtec, and Aztec are represented in their pre-European form. Artisans, metalworkers, musicians, stoneworkers, inventors, and priests represent the cultural and artistic greatness of the south. The capital city of the Aztecs, Tenochtitlan, stands above them all flanked by the mountainous peaks of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, both worshipped as gods by the Mexica people historically. On the right, Rivera celebrated the industrial, technological, and mechanical creativity of the north: farming and mining technology, oil rigs and logging, the figures of Henry Ford, Robert Fulton, and Thomas Edison are shown with their inventions, among others. A conveyer belt winds its way around the right edge bringing minerals and resources to the central construct as on the right the winding and colorful figure of Quetzalcoatl bringing creative light and energy. The mountain peaks of Shasta and Lassen provide balance to their counterparts in the south on the far left side. The left and right interior panels show modern characters and events from both the south and the north including figures from the Mexican Revolutions, Olympians, artists, politicians, and more. Diego is located next to his then wife Frieda Kahlo depicted as a great cultural educator, while he is shown with the actress and wife of Charlie Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, planting a cieba tree. What makes this mural doubly significant is that the public was able to watch Rivera and his assistants paint the panels in situ during the exposition. Not an uncommon occurrence at this point, however, the sheer scale of the work made it likely one of the first monumental murals to be experienced as a live painting by a public in North America. After the exposition the mural was boxed and stored until 1961 where it was installed in the Diego Rivera Theatre at The City College of San Francisco where it remains for public viewing and in preparation for a major exhibition of Rivera's work set for 2020.

[39] A highly innovative and forward thinking artist, Siqueiros first developed the use of paint guns, airbrushes, projectors, and photo elements to paint murals in the 1930s. For *Street Worker Meeting* he developed the American

Fresco medium by applying paint to wet cement using a spray gun fusing the materials together. Although this medium would not gain popular traction, the tools and methods he used continued to be popularized in the mural arts in later generations in America and abroad. He also started using a film projector to outline his sketch which also helped to better position the mural vis-à-vis the architectural aspects of the wall. With these new techniques, he was able to quickly produce heroic scaled murals in a style which lent to larger characters and themes, creating new audiences from the public. (Stein 1994, Shrank 2009)

[40] Stein (1994) identifies this mural as being titled *Workers Meeting*, however, additional resources from The Chouinard Foundation (http://www.chouinardfoundation.org) identify this mural as being titled *Street Meeting*.

[41] Stein 1994: 75

[42] In 2005 a group of Siqueiros enthusiasts together with local art conservators discovered the remains of the mural still partly intact under layers of paint and reconstruction in the area. To this day efforts to restore this mural continue amid the difficulties of removing the layers of construction and paint. (Muchnic 2005)

[43] Stein 1994: 79

[44] Stein 1994, Shrank 2009

[45] Shrank 2009

[46] The Getty Conservation Institute and the City of Los Angeles invested several million dollars to restore the mural. Efforts continue to restore the mural for public viewing amid the difficulties of removing the layers of construction and paint. [Muchnic 2010] For more information in the current efforts to study and conserve this mural visit https://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/field_projects/siqueiros/

[47] *The People to the University, the University to the People* (1952-1956). A decade later he painted *The March of Humanity on Earth and Toward the Cosmos: Misery and Science* (1964-1971), a massive interior/exterior mural covering 8700 m² wrapping around the World trade Center in Mexico City. Up until recently, it was one of the largest murals produced in the world. An outside retaining wall also has a mural by Siqueiros celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Mexican mural movement with portraits of Dr. Atl, Rivera, and Orozco.

[48] Stein 1994, Shrank 2009

[49] Shrank 2009

[50] Berman 1978, Marling 1982, Beckham 1989, Lee 1999

[51] Berman 1978, Marling 1982

[52] Berman 1978

[53] Gilmartin 1995

[54] Berman 1978

[55] The Coit Tower Controversy of 1933 or the Aiken Courthouse fiasco of 1938, for instance. For a more thorough review and discussion of socially & politically radical mural paintings of 1930s – 1940s USA see Marling 1982, Beckham 1989, Birdwell 1989, Swanson & Malkson 2009, Cherny 2017, and Kamiya 2017.

[56] Berman 1978

[57] Marling 1982, Cherny 2017

[58] For more a more detailed examination of these murals and the controversy which unfolded around the project see Swanson & Malkson 2009 and Cherny 2017.

[59] Marling 1982, Swanson & Malkson 2009

[60] Under Pressure from the media, the Union of Artists and Writers issued a statement in July 1934 demanding the artists remove the controversial content. Later this was amended to only Wright's mural. Later that month 16 of the artists signed a statement distancing themselves from Wright and his unauthorized inclusion of the worker's party slogan. Cunningham, Olmstead, Stackpole, Howard, Wight, and Arnautoff refused to sign (Cherny 2017).

[61] Marling 1982, Jewett Zakheim 1983, Cherny 2017, Kamiya 2017

[62] Marling 1982: 48

[63] In one case, Rowan had spent months scrutinizing the work of the artist Doris Lee. He even made an unannounced visit to her studio in March 1937 to review and oversee her upcoming mural *General Store and Post Office* set to be installed in the Ariel Ross Federal Building in Washington D.C. the following year. He had taken issue with the size the characters heads and their bland expressions in her initial submission and so went to speak with her in person to ensure that the required alterations and 'corrections' would to be made not just to the satisfaction of the FAP, but to his own. (Marling 1982)

[64] Marling 1982

[65] The southern attitude to FDR's New Deal programs was one of ambivalence at best and were seen as Yankee government enterprises meant to reconstruct their southern society and culture to be more in line with northern attitudes and tastes. Although these programs brought in new and much needed jobs, parks, cheap electricity and other resources, outside administrators were typically brought in which deprived the southern states, governments, and

people of their autonomy and control over their economies and communities. Muralists commissioned by a northern administration in Washington to paint murals in their public buildings was seen as an intentional affront when in truth it was largely just neglectful. (Beckham 1989) The production of southern murals by northern artists also extended the controversies which came out of civil war monuments and statues which were produced outside of the region, including by Northern artists and firms. Most of these statues were produced between 1890 and 1920, so Southern animosities towards outside artists misrepresenting their culture and history were still high, especially with artists from the North. For more discussion regarding the debate over historical and artistic aspects of Southern monuments and statues see Sarah Beetham, *Confederate Monuments: Southern Heritage or Southern Art?* Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art 6, no. 1 (Spring 2020).

[66] Marling 1982, Beckham 1989, Mielnik 2012. The installation or removal of any mural, monument, or statue can be understood as a political statement that when responded to reveals how public art is important to shaping attitudes and values. The debates and protests surrounding Confederate symbolism, Southern statues and those which celebrate controversial historical figures in the United States and Canada are more recent examples of this that also display the renewed urgency in the struggle over how these attitudes and values are expressed in public space. For more on the political aesthetics of public art see Fred J. Evans, *Public Art and the Fragility of Democracy: An Essay in Political Aesthetics*. Columbia University Press. 2018.

[67] The controversy over this case that came to be known as 'the great Aiken compromise of 1940' had a good deal of background and devious maneuvers which were not publicized. Judge Myers apparently had some political clout with the state being that he was the father-in-law of Governor B. Maybank. His 'removal campaign' gained strength in the upper social and economic circles in Aiken. He even petitioned the Justice Department and the office of the U.S. Courts to put pressure on Section officials to have the mural removed. Eventually it was decided that the mural would remain, though it would be covered while the court was in session by the tanned curtains, and the public would not be able to view it for years. (Marling 1982)

[68] Kendi, Ibrahim X. *How to be an Anti-Racist*. Penguin, Random House. 2019.

[69] Barnett 1984

[70] Emory Douglas, the minister of art and culture for the Black Panthers from 1967 until the 1980s, used his graphic art in The Black Panther newsletter for the political organization. He also created other media such as postcards, flyers, and posters to recruit members and spread the party's ideology. His posters typically featured militant Black figures in bold and action oriented poses, used collage and eye-catching color schemes and slogans. The imagery and approach he utilized are still reproduced in contemporary political poster campaigns –one of the most popular being the upraised fist. He remains one of the earliest examples of important political graphic street art in the United States.

[71] Barnett 1984: 44

[72] Crockcroft et al 1977: 17

[73] Barnett 1984: 42

[74] Crockcroft et al 1977: xxi

[75] Crockcroft et al 1977, Barnett 1984

[76] Between 1900 and 1930 during the first Great Migration, the Black population in Chicago rose from ~30,000 to ~250,000. The municipal government designated a small chain of neighborhoods in the south of the city as an area of new settlement which came to be known as the Black Belt. These neighborhoods soon became over crowded. Hostile white ethnic groups formed restrictive covenants limiting the opportunities of Black residents to seek housing in areas outside of the Black Belt. As the borders to this ghetto slowly expanded into the surrounding white districts, intolerance, animosities, and violence intensified: fire bombings, raids by white gangs, and attacks on students and workers who had to pass through white neighborhoods to get to their schools and workplaces. (Abu Lughod 1999)

[77] Ellsworth 2009

[78] Golden et al 2006, Ellsworth 2009, Reardon 2017

[79] Barnett 1984: 51

[80] Black World/Negro Digest. Vol 17(10): 69. August 1968.

[81] The *1967 Detroit Riot*, otherwise known as the *1967 Detroit Rebellion* or the *12th Street Riot*.

[82] Elsworth 2009

[83] Crockcroft et al mention that the fire originated behind Johnny Ray's, a TV and radio repair shop, next to the wall and that it was deliberate. They allude to those groups making efforts to redevelop the area such as developers and property owners, however, the fire could have been racially motivated as there were also local groups surrounding the Black Belt area who took issue with the representation of Black cultural figures and the charged visual scenes of KKK members and such on the wall.

[84] Crockcroft et al 1977, Barnett 1984, Sorrell 1979

[85] Crockcroft et al 1977: 8. The Department of Cultural Affairs selected The New York City Community Arts Workshop (Cityarts) to carry out a pilot project in the Governor Alfred E. Smith Houses located in Manhattan's lower east side in 1968 to explore how community muralism could be used to improve the quality of life of inner city neighborhoods. A number of these projects involved the use of a projector to facilitate the outlining and painting of murals by groups of youth and other community members who were not skilled painters. Although this may have been the first time that a projector was used to help sketch out and help paint community murals, it appears to have been an independent innovation not directly linked to Siqueiros' creative use of the projector in L.A. some 50 years prior. Artists from Cityarts would continue to work with youth and community members to paint murals across the city in the following years.[85] To this day Cityarts continues to produce community murals, mosaics, and art projects with neighborhood organizations across New York City. See Braun-Reintz and Weissman 2009 for further reading on Cityarts history and projects.

[86] Crockcroft et al 1977: 8-10

[87] Joseph R. Shapiro, president of the MCA approached the artists in late 1970 inviting them to showcase their art in the museum galleries. They were offered a month's salary and materials. The basement galleries were converted into workshops where the artists painted portable panels during the month long exhibit from February 15th - March 15th 1971. (https://lucian.uchicago.ed)

[88] Walker's mural panel, *Wall of Love*, was later installed on the third floor exterior wall of the South Side Community Art Center; Eda's panel was installed in the Olivet Presbyterian Church; Rogovin's at the National Angela Davis Defense Committee; and Weber's at the Pedro Albizu Campos Center for the People's Health

[89] Walker et al 1971

[90] Sorrell 2007

[91] Winer 1971, Barnett 1984, Sorel 2007

[92] The first major federal source of monies since the New Deal era for community arts was the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) which began in 1970. It required that any funding provided for projects be matched by equal amounts from local agencies or municipalities. These agencies would then distribute the funds through local institutions such as foundations, museums, or municipal offices (Barnett 1984) To this day the NEA continues to support local arts projects across the United States with an impressive annual budget of approximately $150 million dollars. For more information on their current projects please visit www.arts.gov

[93] Barnett 1984: 433

[94] Castleman 1982, Lachmann 1988, Ferrell 1996, Gauthier 1998, MacDonald 2001

[95] Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries
http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/pacscl/ead.html?id=PACSCL_PMA_PMA003

[96] Golden et al, 2006: 12

[97] Meg Saligman is a celebrated muralist in the United States and abroad who has painted over fifty murals throughout her career. She focuses on community collaboration and exchange in her works that are site specific and reflect themes associated with social and cultural themes. Her murals always incorporate elements from the surrounding environment and communities that she paints them in. One of her more recent works (assisted by seven local artists) *The MLK Mural: We Will Not be Satisfied* (2015) located on MLK Boul. In Chattanooga, TN is considered to be one of the largest murals painted in the United States at approximately 40 thousand square feet. (http://www.chattanooga.gov)

[98] Golden 2013

[99] Golden et al 2006

[100] In April 1967 the artist Tania was contracted by a New York City architect to paint a wall of a vacant lot of a parking lot at 10 evergreen Avenue in Brooklyn. This was actually the first non-commercial wall painted in New York City which undoubtedly informed D'Arcangelo's mural painted several months later. Her wall is listed as part of the City Walls Inc. murals. Wasserman (2014)

[101] Wasserman 2014: 76

[102] Barnett 1984: 38

Chapter II

[103] Signature graffiti (Gauthier 1998) is graffiti that is based on the name of an individual, a nickname chosen (rather than ascribed) or generated at some point with peers. Graffiti writers lay unlawful claim to public spaces in the city by inscribing their signatures in calligraphic styles using spray paints and permanent markers, among other materials.

[104] Hebdige 1979: 18

[105] Castleman 1982, Cooper & Chalfant 1984, Lachmann 1988, Ferrell 1996, Maxwell 1997, Gauthier 1998, Phillips 1999, Kephart 2001, Barthel 2002, MacDonald 2001, Halsey & Young 2006, MacGillivray & Curwen 2007

[106] Scan passed away in 2017 after a long fight with cancer. He was 36 years old but had achieved the status of King/Chef among local writers as well as those abroad in the United States and Europe. His fame and celebrity as a writer and artist remains unmatched by any in the local Montreal subculture. Commemorations and dedications by writers and artists, some of whom have never even met him but have appreciated his work online or from afar, continue to appear even several years after his passing.
[107] MacDonald 2001, Waclawek 2011
[108] In New York City during the 1970s inner city gangs were common place. Most would use gang symbols to mark territory with spray paint. Youth who wanted to do graffiti but did not want to join the gangs formed crews for protection. (Castleman 1982)
[109] A popular term used among graffiti writers meaning to watch out –be a look out –for another writer who is doing graffiti and to warn them of any danger or if passerby or police are near. Originally derived from military usage of a clock face to denote a soldier's or squad's directional focus. When an infantry squad of soldiers moves, one or more members are assigned to the back of the squad, the 6 o'clock position, to ensure that no surprise enemy attacks occur.
[110] The most common and visible form of graffiti besides stickers. It is not uncommon to find groupings of tags from numerous writers clustered around each other on high trafficked areas in the city. Tags are central to the graffiti writer identity and from which all style and technique are built around. Tagging is the first stage of a writer's career within the subculture and is the primary mode of getting up. Tags are typically done in a single color using marker, ink, or paint, and executed in single, practiced movements. (Castleman 1982, Waclawek 2011).)
[111] Throwups (throwies, flops) consist of simple, rounded, bubble style letters, executed in a single color and outlined with a darker one. Elaborate throw-ups may use a third color to create a glow effect ['uni' or 'force field']. Like tags, throw ups are a quantity-based type of graffiti, however, some established bombers may place more emphasis on painting precise throw ups. So-called 'throw-up specialists' (Castleman 1982) make extraordinary efforts to produce throw ups along entire train lines or across storefront windows, walls, and doors.
[112] Snyder 2009: 199
[113] There are other types of graffiti such as *hollows* and *straight letters* which are also quite popular among bombers but can be included in the categories already covered in this chapter. A hollow (*outline* or *shell)* is a throwup composed only of an outline and no fill in. Sometimes a drop shadow is added to create a 3D effect. A straight letter (*straight* or *simple)* is a blocky and simpler to read rendering of a piece commonly executed in two colors in arrangements of silver, chrome, black or white spray paint. Larger straight letters are known as *blockbusters* and can be several meters high and tens of meters in length. Typically used to promote crew names in highly visible or trafficked areas.
[114] For instance, Los Angeles *cholo* style refers to Old English typographic black lettering used by gangs and graffiti writers. This is distinct from New York style of *bubble* lettering or Philadelphia's *long and tall* style where the letters are stretched out while retaining a balance and flow to the overall tag. Handstyles are a common way by which graffiti writers evaluate each other's levels of competency within the subculture. Those who have the best handstyles are highly regarded and often emulated by younger or upcoming writers. For a more detailed review of the many different fonts and handstyles in graffiti writing see *Flip the script : a guidebook for aspiring vandals & typographers* by Christian P Acker (2013) and *Graffiti Alphabets: Street Fonts From Arounds the World*, by Claudia Walde (2011)
[115] Shorthand for *masterpiece*. A large, multi-color, and labor-intensive graffiti painting of a writers signature that can incorporate a number of different effects (3D lettering, arrows, halos, clouds, bubbles, color fades and cuts, transitions, characters, and messages). A piece is considered to be the fullest and most skilled work that can be accomplished artistically by a writer. The more stylish, technical, and precise a piece is, the more respect a writer gains from peers in the subculture. Many writers practice piecing in sketch books, often testing out different styles and color schemes before applying them to larger wall surfaces. The most elaborate and complicated of pieces are called *wildstyles* which use multiple and overlapping elements and push the creative limits of what a writer can do artistically.
[116] A large multi-writer graffiti painting, usually, but not always, incorporating a specific theme or topic which pieces are painted around. Typically painted by writers in the same crew but multi-crew productions are also common. Productions can be small in scale involving only two or three writers or as large as a city block and several stories high involving the participation of a dozen or more writers. Large-scale productions are most commonly painted at graffiti jams, events, and festivals while smaller productions can be found in a variety of locations including abandoned or neglected lots and buildings, train yards, and the areas surrounding transportation infrastructure. Pieces and productions have also been popular with inner-city property owners who have historically worked out informal agreements with writers and crew's to paint on the sides of their buildings and parking lots as a deterrence to bombers.
[117] Elaborate permission or commission based graffiti paintings meant to serve as a type of advertisement for small shops and restaurants. Similar to productions these murals likely include pieces by graffiti artists but differ in that the thematic content almost always refers to the patron for which they are painted. Similarly, c*ivic graffiti murals* are sanctioned by municipal authorities and are typically themed around cultural and historical aspects of the community

but do not include pieces by the artists. These murals usually involve a lengthy and formal process for permissions to be granted before painting can begin, including a sketch mock-up of the intended mural, budget, and timeline for the work to be completed.

[118] Historically, established writers and artists have often commanded respect and admiration from younger and less skilled writers for both their efforts at getting up as well as for their style. As a result their productions and murals tended not be tagged or crossed out. If another writer did go over their production or mural the established writer would likely have been able to identify who did it and seek retribution. Typically this was in the form of paint to replace the damaged area or the offender would have had to help to correct the damage along with a healthy threat that if they were to continue with such behavior that they would likely be crossed out by that writer and his crew members.

[119] Lachmann 1988

[120] Prior to Axe, Awe was bring mentored by Math from DA Crew (Delinquent Artists), an older and established writer who had painted throughout the 1980s-1990s. The two of them had met by chance when a local corner store owner had introduced them to each other after learning that Awe was an aspiring graffiti artist. Math had sort of given up on graffiti writing and had not painted regularly in years but his meeting with Awe had sparked up his interest in sketching and painting and things graffiti related again. The two of them took to each other quickly, "You could see that he found a sense of purpose in me and in our relationship. He felt like, 'oh, like all of this was for something, I'm passing it [on], teaching a kid, you know? And he really loved it, and he got addicted to me and I got addicted to him." Math was enthusiastic to pass on everything he knew and had to Awe, his sketches and memorabilia as well as knowledge and history. In his enthusiasm, Math overstepped when he gave Awe the go ahead to rep DA crew. Unfortunately other members of DA did not share Math's enthusiasm which led to some arguments and tensions over accepting such a novice writer to their ranks. Although Awe made efforts to assuage their concerns the damage had been done, leaving Awe in an awkward position. Math was determined to make it right. Perhaps a week later, he had reached out to Axe to help him finish a graffiti mural for a local bike shop and invited Awe to work with them. During this mural job Math extended Awe's mentorship to Axe who accepted him on the provision that he work towards gaining membership in K6A rather than DA. Awe agreed and Axe told him "Okay, so we start now. We start your training now."

[121] This is not the mean spirited or cruel form of bullying, rather, it is type of ribbing or good natured teasing among the group one is made to endure when entering into a tight knit group of friends or a new work place.

[122] In one case these battles ended in the shooting death of one New York City writer by another. Stabbings were not unprecedented, however, killing another over graffiti was not commonplace nor was it considered to be an acceptable solution. One got up and over another writer, and at most threatened or physically beat him if the rivalry escalated.

[123] Murray 2010

[124] I had the opportunity to document the graffiti art at 5 Pointz in 2011 while visiting New York City. Meres One was kind enough to give me a tour of the area and share some historical and anecdotal stories of his time there. We also briefly spoke about the recent news of Wolcoff's interest in redeveloping the location as well as local community efforts to preserve the site. There were several graffiti artist's working on pieces and Meres explained that they had just had a big jam in the courtyard recently with some big NYC writers. Meres explained that 5 Pointz was still quite active and remained an important subcultural site where graffiti writers of all generations were able to meet and paint together.

[125] *Style Wars* and *Subway Art* are widely understood by most writers across the world as being the first and most complete description of graffiti writing culture and its genesis in New York City in the 1970s. There are few writers who do not know of these titles, own them in their personal collections, or have seen them at some point in their writing careers, and can attest to the influence that they have had on their own personal ideas and tastes associated with writing and pursuing a career as a graffiti writer. Subway Art has been most popularly labeled as the *graffiti bible* by many writers from North America and Europe.

[126] The participating writers were Insight, Alone, Other, Cole, Case, Diske, Flow, Seaz, Duro 3, Chrome, Swep, Dstrbo, Spek, Stak, Serch, Res, Gen One, Kaseko, Simo, Fuser, and Zek.

[127] Louise Gauthier, 1998.

[128] Interview conducted by researcher with Seaz in 2008 for Master's thesis work.

[129] The original name for this event in 1997 and several years after was *Wall Street Meeting* which was changed to *Meeting of Styles* after its growth and popularity by 2000-2001.

[130] Information provided by the official website for Wall Street Meeting: http://wallstreetmeeting.de

[131] Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Belgium, USA, Netherlands, England, Finland, Denmark, France, Canada, Belarus, Mexico, Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Russia, and Brazil. Major cities and towns in all of these countries have hosted Meeting of Styles events over the last 6 years.

[132] Mouffe, 2013: 90
[133] Perhaps the most common and direct form of street art. Stencils are accomplished by spray painting a template, which can be made from a single layer piece of cardboard (other materials such as metal, acetate, plastic, and ceramic can also be used), against a surface to produce solid color (typically black) images and words. Templates can be used multiple times, however, weaker materials such as cardboard and acetate provide a limited number of uses before they begin to deteriorate. Street artists who utilize this method often use popular culture references to communicate a variety of messages ranging from the clever and humorous to the social and political. (Waclawek 2011, Young 2014)
[134] Another common form of street art, the wheat paste (paste up) consists of a paper cut out which is glued to a surface using a simple flour-based adhesive (papier-mâché). Images can be hand drawn and cut or computer rendered and printed and depict any number of things from playful images of animals to complex and detailed portraits, characters, or scenes. Wheat pastes are fragile works which can be torn down or washed off by cleaning crews and are vulnerable to natural elements such as rain, ice, and snow. (Young 2014)
[135] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama_%22Hope%22_poster
[136] The original photograph was taken by freelance photographer Mannie Garcia.
[137] Fairey sued the Associated Press in 2009 claiming that the image was used in fair use after being approached for compensation which ended in an out of court settlement in 2011. In February 2012, Fairey pleaded guilty to fabricating and destroying documents related to his 2009 court battle with the Associated Press and admitted to being in error regarding his original claim that the photograph was used in fair use and had attempted to cover it up. He was sentenced to two years' probation, fined $25 000, and ordered to 300 hours of community service.
[138] For instance, Banksy's Stop and Search, painted in Bethlehem, Palestine and part of the Christmas art exhibition titled *Santa's Ghetto*, was removed from its public location and put up for auction by Bankrobber Gallery in London in 2007. For a more thorough discussion concerning the arguments surrounding the stealing, selling, and preservation of street art see *The Street Art World* (2014) by Peter Bengsten.
[139] As discussed above, when it comes to illegally painted graffiti, many graffiti writers will regulate their spots and do battle with other writers to maintain control over them. The extent to which graffiti writers will go to regulate their spots and battle with other writers over them varies from writer to writer, however, many will exert a great deal of time and effort to do so. The constant focus on and efforts at maintaining a hold over specific locations are likely key factors which contribute to their claims of ownership over walls in the city.
[140] The murals of local cultural figures by various artists working with MU in Montreal communities over the last decade are also fine examples, however, these two murals and the tensions surrounding their production are particularly relevant here.
[141] Michaud 2016.
[142]https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/hommage-aux-b%EF%BF%BDtisseurs-culturels-montr%EF%BF%BDalais/ARSMrcdI?hl=fr
[143]https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/giant-mural-commemorating-leonard-cohen-coming-to-crescent-st
Originally in French from the former mayor's twitter feed: Ce magnifique mur au centre-ville deviendra d'ici septembre prochain une magnifique murale 8500pi2 de Leonard Cohen #CollectionBatisseursmu pic.twitter.com/EFwZtvGMk3— Denis Coderre (@DenisCoderre) April 11, 2017
[144] https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/a-leonard-cohen-mural-monstrosity/article35453281/
[145] https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/brownstein-giant-mural-on-crescent-an-ill-fitting-tribute-to-leonard-cohen

Chapter III

[146] Zukin 1995, Quinn 2005
[147] Koster & Randall 2005, Barnes et al 2006, Rantisi & Leslie 2006, Maria de Miguel et al 2013, Ulldemolins 2014, Jazdzewska 2017
[148] Vanolo 2008: 371
[149] Rantisi et al 2006: 365
[150] Harvey 1989, Florida 2014
[151] http://enmasse.info/project/musee-des-beaux-arts-montreal-big-bang/
[152] This was not the first time that community and street art have been institutionally accepted and presented in a museum exhibit, as discussed in the first chapter with Eugene Eda and the other muralists in Chicago in the 1970s. There have been other moments where community and street art have been given institutional support, however, it was always in the context of the art world rather than the urban branding projects more recently. En Masse can been understood as one of the first steps towards this new valuation of street art (and graffiti to some extent) in Montreal. The Big Bang exhibit helped to legitimate street art in the city and revealed its potential to draw in public appreciators.

It also showed the need for institutional partnership and funding in order to produce big and inspiring works and interventions.

[153] McAuliffe 2012. Furthermore, as discussed in the second chapter, at the core of this process is what appears to be the systematic displacement and dispossession of graffiti muralism and culture. The formal and moral coding of graffiti and street art as creative industries interrupts the informal development of graffiti muralism. Like all things neoliberal, it aims to commoditize, erase, and replace in its own image, ignoring any similarly oriented developments in the subculture which have helped to sustain community ties and history for over twenty years.

[154] In March of 2017 Kevin Ledo went to China to complete a five week arts residency in the city of Shenzhen He explained that graffiti and street art were being deployed as markers of urban cool by developers in their attempts to raise the notability of their properties. "In what looks like alleys ways and streets that are far off, I thought it was graffiti, but upon closer look, was vinyl print outs…of graffiti'd walls…Even around a mall…they have printed out vinyl stickers of graffiti."

[155] https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/08/21/russias-street-art-festival-unveils-sky-high-spray-painting-a66958

[156] Quinn 2005: 932

[157] Boltanski &Chiapello 2005: xxxvii

[158] Miles 2010, Bookman 2014

[159] Ren 2012

[160] Harvey 1989

[161] Florida et al 2005

[162] Florida et al 2005: 12

[163] Rantisi & Leslie 2006: 366, but also Evans 2003: 420

[164] This can lead to the fetishization and conspicuous consumption of street art muralism as *status symbols* (Veblen 1953, Eastman et al 1999). The practice of using certain products or services can be understood as the signalling of social status aspirations and superior status to other consumers in society (Eastman et al 1999: 42). This is also tied to *status consumption* whereby individuals seek association to certain prestige groups through imitative consumption behaviors and patterns. The research on conspicuous consumption has focused on the actual consumption of products in capitalist societies. For the purposes of this discussion it is the conspicuous consumption of street art muralism, namely though attending urban arts festivals but also through smart phones and devices, and shared on digital social media platforms, that has found increasing traction in cities which promote street art mural festivals as part of their urban branding strategies. This research is unable to fully engage with this growing phenomenon given its scope, however, where appropriate discussion will be made to understand how it connects to street art muralism and urban branding place making strategies.

[165] Evans 2003

[166] Ulldemolins 2014

[167] Spinello 2011

[168] http://www.thewynwoodwalls.com/

[169] Rantisi & Leslie 2006: 368

[170] Ibid. p. 369

[171] Uldemollins 2014

[172] Barnes et al 2006: 336

[173] Rantisi & Leslie (2006) and Ren & Morgan (2012)

[174] Ibid. p. 352

[175] Quinn 2005

[176] See chapter 4 for a more in depth discussion about this event

[177] Usually every Mural Festival AG Crew set up an informal production or jam, sometimes in conjunction with Mural Festival. It brings attention to the store and kiosk set up out front for the sidewalk sale and helps to promote the business while also giving space for some local writers, on invitation, to jam and get up. In 2019 AG Crew helped to organize a larger mural production with several members of the subculture to commemorate the writer and artist Scan who had passed away in 2017. Osti helped to negotiate the permission for the wall space and the area with property owners along the street to clean up the area and regulate the walls with their production. His working with the mural department in the borough of Outremont helped legitimate his requests. This was also facilitated by Mural Festival stepping in to make it an official part of the festival. They even had their crews come and help to clean up the alley way area that was full of refuse and garbage. Having the support of a formal cadre like Mural Festival also helped to legitimate and boost confidence in the proposed production. It was a kind gesture by Mural Festival to back the jam and showed that informal and formal cadres could indeed work together to produce meaningful work. In this case both

came together to help maintain a graffiti territory and place of worship as well as lending to the historical continuity of the subculture. Smak printed some flyers and with the help of Karine, Scan's widow, distributed them to all the neighbors to the alleyway on the adjacent street to inform them of the proposed production to be painted over the course of the week during the festival. All but one of the tenants accepted the notice without issue. Halfway through the alley was a freshly constructed wooden fence with a note requesting that no graffiti be painted on it so Smak and the others covered it in plastic wrap to ensure that it remained clean throughout the course of the jam. Upwards of 30 writers, if not more, came through to paint on the production and jam. In fact by the evening of that first day there were about 50 people in the alley way area, writers, artists and their families socializing, having food and drinks. A couple of bbqs were set up and Otak had even had an impromptu Deejay spot to play some music. Throughout the week writers and their families and friends would intermittently return to have a drink and a smoke, check up on the progress of the wall, socialize some more, and remember their friend.

[178] The Café worked with a number of commercial and municipal clients such as Oakley Canada, Bell Canada, Balen Blanc (Palais des Congres de Montreal); Labatt, Bud Light, arena de Gatineau; Brahma Beers; local movies, commercials and films (back grounds); GYM, le Groupe Yvon Michel; FrancoFolies de Montreal; Johnson and Johnson, bureaux de Montreal; the Olympic Stadium, Ubisoft, Cirque de Soliel, and Music Plus.

[179] For more information on this event visit A'Shop's website https://www.ashop.ca/lennox

[180] https://mashable.com/2016/07/13/thermochromic-murals-exhibit/

[181] Vanolo 2008: 380

[182] Rantisi & Leslie 2006

[183] Julier 2005

[184] Rantisi & Leslie 2006: 368

[185] Arguments for the value of street art and street art muralism revolve around the quality of life that they provide in that they improve people's perspectives of their communities. Which indeed they do as can be evidenced by the responses of residents in communities where street art muralism is located. But as much as this is true, the quality of life is secondary to quality of place in that property owners, urban managers, and municipal governments are more interested in the commercial improvements and profits that come along with street art muralism than the welfare of community residents. An improvement of commercial or corporate value always confers the improvement of communities in that if business is doing well then people are consuming, so they must be happy.

[186] Rantisi & Leslie 2006: 366, but also Kearns and Philo 1993

[187] Quinn 2005

[188] Harvey 1989, Vanolo 2008, Ulldemolins 2014.

[189] Harvey 1989: 11

[190] Barnes et al 2006: 374

[191] Clark 2004

[192] Barnes et al 2006: 345

[193] Rantisi & Leslie 2006: 374 but also Miles 2005

[194] Barnes et al 2006: 346

[195] Ren & Morgan 2012

[196] Harvey 1989: 13

[197] Ibid.

Chapter IV

[198] Rasmussen 2017:62

[199] Tally 2007

[200] Boltanksi 2011

[201]Examples of some of their "clients" include McDonalds, Phillip Morris, Wachovia Bank, AT&T and the NSA, and Johnny Walker. The BLF manifesto can be found on their website http://www.billboardliberation.com as well as several articles from members concerning the imposition of public space by corporations and advertisers. As well, an 18 page document is available for download, aptly named *The Art and Science of Billboard Improvement: A Comprehensive Guide to the Alteration of Outdoor Advertising*, that provides step-by-step instructions on how to go about "improving" billboards and other forms of "outdoor advertising" for those interested in pursuing such activities.

[202] The seven participating artists included Ron English, Sam3, Swoon, Blu, Paul Insect, Faile, and Ericailcane.

[203] Fairey collaborated with the art collective *Post Gen* to produce anti-war and anti-Bush political posters in 2004, he produced cover art for the anti-war song *Shock and Awe* featuring DJ Z-Trip and Chuck D in 2005, and in 2007 he

made art for the *Body of War* documentary and accompanying album *Body of War: Songs That Inspired an Iraq War Veteran*.

[204] Fairey teamed up with Ron English and several other street artists in 2008 for a grass roots street art campaign in several U.S. cities to build support for the presidential hopeful's campaign. See chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion.

[205] http://www.progressive.org/dambrosio0609.html (Accessed June 2018 but the link is no longer active. A copy of the article is still available for viewing on Sheppard Fairey's web site https://obeygiant.com/articles/the-progressive-mag-citizen-artist/)

[206] Fairey has continued to donate either his artwork or proceeds from shows and events to social and political causes and to raise awareness to societal issues and injustices.

[207] In 2018 Fairey also painted a rendition of the Johnny Cash poster from the exhibit in a massive 15 storey mural in Sacramento California to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Cash's Live at Folsom Prison.

[208] https://www.aptart.org/

[209] The four other participating artists were Jonathan Darby from the United Kingdom, Ruben Sanchez from Spain, AKUT –one half of the street art duo HERAKUT –from Germany, and Suhaib Attar, a native of Jordan.

[210] http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/jo

[211] Ernesto Maranje's mural *The Guardian* depicted a giant tiger standing several stories above an underwater flower and coral garden in which messages from local homeless youth are written. Aptart had hoped to continue the project into 2017 with two more murals, however, it would be the following year before they could return to the city again with Ernesto Maranje and Suhaib Attar, a Jordanian street artist, to work with immigrant and refugee youth and those affected by homelessness. Their collaborative street art mural *Together We Rise*, was painted on the outside walls of a local garage and sponsored by the Regional Arts & Culture Council, David Douglas High School, IRCO, with paints supplied by Montana Cans.

[212] https://sites.up.edu/readytoserve/ircos-rise-program-at-david-douglas-high-school/

[213] Although Kevin did not tell me the name of the United Nations program it was likely UNICEF or a section of UNODC, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

[214] AFTA - Arts Education Navigator - Facts & Figures 2013. http://www.americansforthearts.org

[215] A survey done by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2018 shows a significant equity gap in education across the United States, with Black and Hispanic students earning up to 30 percent less art credits than their white peers. https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/arts-education/10-arts-education-fast-facts#_ftn9 from Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups, by the National Center for Education Statistics, the American Institutes for Research, and the U.S. Department of Education, 2018. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf

[216] Although the school has the space and equipment to hold arts classes, the administration was unable to afford hiring a qualified and full time art teacher since 2009. In 2014 an art's instructor was finally hired but he was severely over worked teaching up to seven classes of 40 more students a day. https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/jose-de-diego-middle-school_n_6558616?ri18n=true

[217] School Environmental Safety Incident Report, School Year 2013-14 http://www.fldoe.org/safe-schools/discipline-data.stml

[218] Florida Department of Education http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7673/urlt/14-15-miamidade-onsite.pdf

[219] https://www.npr.org/2014/12/05/368251787/a-miami-school-goes-from-blank-canvas-to-mural-covered

[220] http://www.thedailywood.com/post.php?id=473

[221] In the interview for the Daily Wood from March of 2016, Robert de los Rios mentions that securing funding was still an issue over a year into the project and that although the project had gained many supporters but not much in terms of donations.

[222] Between 2013-14 and 2016-17 enrollment increased about 15 percent, average daily attendance increased 2.5 percent, and far less students (14.69 percent) missed 21 or more days. The following year (2014-15) incidents of violence among the students at JDD Middle School were reduced by half (68 total reported cases). The number of reported incidents of violence reduced to a total of 10 in (2015-16).

[223] I happened to be in Miami that month attending Art Basel following the graffiti artists of Montreal's A'Shop as they worked to make their mark during the event that year. When I heard about Kevin painting for RAW on the outskirts of the district I took some time to visit him there to see the work and find out more about the project. Kevin was up on the lift most the days so it was hard to have a conversation with him there. We exchanged hellos and small talk but I did not want to take him away from his work, especially in the heavy Miami sun. I would just take pictures and get what I could while I was taking a break from documenting the guys from A'Shop over at Concrete Brewery and the district more generally. As well, the school was still holding classes while the artists worked so the public was

not allowed on school grounds to just watch them, so that made it difficult to wander and chat with the artists and to get a better idea of the progress of the project. It would be several months later that I had the opportunity to sit and talk with him more about it all in Montreal when we had both returned and recuperated from our 'Basel experience.' When I stopped through to check up on his work sporadically over a week's time, I could see Mr. June and others up on their lifts working at finishing their respective contributions, and all I could really do was take a few pictures and jot down some notes at the time. Kevin and I talked a little while at social events but there was not much I had prepared to talk to him on as I was following A'Shop. As well, we were out eating and drinking and there was much fanfare and lots of socializing so it was hard to have a more serious discussion about his work besides some passing comments or thoughts.

[224] I met two graffiti artists from Burlington Vermont, Capes1 and Eskae1, who were painting a garage door next to the A'Shop Crew on 24th Avenue NW. They wanted to paint something that was in solidarity with the North Dakota pipeline protestors but they decided to tone down the overt politics and do something more symbolically oriented. Their mural represented the four elements of wind, water, earth, and fire along with a selection of totemic animals of indigenous peoples. There were a number of other street art pieces and murals as well as other graffiti murals and many stickers throughout the district which involved varying level of connection to these protests as well.

[225] The DREAM Act is legislation which proposed to grant temporary residency to immigrants who had entered the United States while they were still minors providing them with the rights to work and live with the possibility of permanent residency.

[226] According to the Florida Department of Education, School Environmental Safety Incident Reports from 2016-18 there were 110 reported incidents of fighting, bullying and harassment at JDD Middle School over those two years. Although the absences have not returned to the levels they were at in 2013-14 at JDD Middle School, between 2015-18 there was a steady increase in the number of students missing 21 days or more in the school year, and in 2018-19 a full third (33.20%) of the student body had missed ten percent of the total calendar year. At E.M. Hartner Elementary, absences also remained below what they were in 2015-16, but there was also a slight 2 percent increase in 21 days or more absences.

[227] http://www.thedailywood.com/post.php?id=473

[228] Biographical information for Miss Chief Rocka from https://www.misschiefrocka.com/the-artist

[229] https://www.avenuecalgary.com/city-life/guide-to-calgary-bump-murals/

[230] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdsM1hxnXXc&feature=youtu.be

[231] Although I did not delve deeper into this topic with Jason at the time, the graffiti writing and street art in Egypt and in other Arab countries or territories such as Tunisia, Palestine, Syria, and Iran by youth, has received increased attention by researchers and scholars over the last decade, especially since the Arab Spring between 2010 and 2012. This research is deeply interested in the socio-political motivations and applications of graffiti and street art, but the focus is on North America, and Europe only by extension through the work of the artists that I have followed and interviewed. This chapter does provide some discussion and comparison, but it is brief as the focus is on North American artists. To take on the task of critically comparing and contrasting these disparate sides of the graffiti and street art world would require a research project onto itself in order to provide a more proper and thorough cross cultural discussion and analysis. The political motivations and consequences for graffiti in these Arab states and territories are remarkably different that those that have been discussed here and warrant further attention and discussion beyond what I have only briefly mentioned. There are an increasing number of articles regarding graffiti and street art in the Arab World, and there is a growing circle of research and scholars who are focusing on this topic. For instance, *When Art Is the Weapon: Culture and Resistance Confronting Violence in the Post-Uprisings Arab World* (2015) by Mark Levine, *Engaged Ephemeral Art: Street Art and the Egyptian Arab Spring* (2016) by Saphinaz-Amal Naguib, of the University of Oslo and "*The Banksy Effect" and Street Art in the Middle East* (2015) by Sabrina DeTurk. For further reading on graffiti and street art in the Arab world with thought provoking photographs and cultural discussion see *Gaza Graf*fiti (2009) and *Revolutionary Graffiti* (2012) by Mia Grondahl or *Against The Wall: The Art of Resistance in Palestine* by William Perry (2010).

[232] To-date Pangea Seed has created over 300 murals with more than 250 artists participating in thirty arts events across fifteen countries including New Zealand, the United States, Mexico, Indonesia, Australia, and Canada. For more information on PangaSeed and their ongoing projects and work, including the Sea Walls arts program, visit https://www.pangeaseed.foundation/sea-walls/

[233] Other artists included Seth Globepainter, Faith47, Meggs, Phibs, Berst, Carly Ealey, Alyssa Irizarry, Christie Wright, Cracked Ink, Cryptik, Ekundayo, Erika Pearce, Flox, White, Georgia Hill, Jack Marsden Mayer, James Bullough, Jet Martinez, Kai'ili Kaulukukui, Kelly Spencer, Leanne Culy, and Onur.

[234] https://www.napier.govt.nz/napier/community-art/sea-walls-murals-for-oceans/

[235] http://www.mcgilltribune.com/student-life/murals-of-montreal-jason-botkins-sidewalk-art-338789/

[236] Contributing artists included Sermob, Birdo, Craatoes, Chris Koneki, Cinzah Merkins, Peru 143, Jaz, PA System, Sens, Young Jarus, Kwest, Valinas, Kevin Ledo, Bruno Smokey, Elicser Elliott, Olivier Bonnard, Rajni Perera, Kirsten Mccrea, Jon Todd, EGR, MC Baldassari, Erica Balon and Jason Botkin.

[237] During Mexico's economic crisis in the mid-1990s there were little or no reliable sources of credit. Artists were unable to find work because they had no capital to invest in projects and clients were unable to pay for materials. As a paint supplier he was inevitably put into contact with local master painters, schools, and of course the graffiti and street art communities. Edgar took a risk and extended these painters and clients credit without collateral holding to the credo that doing good produces good, and what goes around, really goes around. Sometimes his clients were unable to pay him for his work, however, because of his policy of kindness many referred him to other paying clients or made his paint company their supplier moving forward. Eventually, as the country came out of its economic crisis, he was able to build a loyal and dedicated customer base for his paint company which allowed him to start supplying and supporting local graffiti and street arts events and festivals in the years following. Applying the same strategy that he had with the master painters and school arts teachers, Edgar accepted the graffiti and street artists not as vandals but as emerging artists who wanted to contribute socially and culturally to their communities. Besides donating paint and supplies to events and festivals, Edgar has also given these artists a legitimate public platform under the banner of Nueve Arte Urbano to share and promote their work

[238] Nueve Arte Urbano produces arts events and activations which are responsive to specific community needs, history, and design. Their unique and grounded approach has led to institutional partnerships and events such as the *Urban Art in Concrete* exposition at the Anahuacalli Museum in Mexico City in 2014 and the *Living Walls Colloquium* in 2015 which invited artists, academics and government representatives to critically think and discuss on the phenomenon of graffiti over a three day conference.

[239] https://ossingtonvillage.com/2017/05/rally-ossington-is-closed/

[240] Ibid.

[241] Murals were painted by Jason Botkin, Young Jarus and Kwest, Kirsten Mccrea, PA System, Erica Balon and EGR, MC Baldassari, and Rajni Perera.

[242] https://www.toronto.ca/311/knowledgebase/kb/docs/articles/parks,-forestry-and-recreation/urban-forestry/biggest-polluters-of-the-don-river.html

[243] The initial Love Letters project was a success and it led to two more smaller but meaningful iterations the year following and again in 2019. A second permanent mural was painted in 2017 that was sponsored again by Friends of the Pan AM Path and the City of Toronto. Painted by Montreal artist Olivier Bonnard, the mural covers the 60 foot pillar space in the Bentway public area underneath the Gardiner Expressway (Bent 53). Bonnard's mural is meant to draw attention to the growing imbalance within the Lake Ontario ecosystem and how it threatens marine life, specifically the Red Side Dace, a native and endangered fish species. In 2019 Jason painted another mural under the Love Letter banner along Bathurst Street that included the words and poetry from Torontonians about the Great Lakes.

[244] Grenada has taken steps to institute a Blue Growth economic strategy which aims to sustainably use ocean resources for economic growth. In May 2016 government agencies, international organizations, and stakeholders came together for *Blue Week* a conference to promote interest in their newly developing blue growth economy

[245] Leatherback turtles are listed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as being an endangered or critically endangered species, depending on the geographical location. Located in the Northeast of the island is a national park and nesting beach for leatherbacks where efforts are made to preserve the shoreline environment ensuring that the turtles and hatchlings are protected.

[246] https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-sayisi-dene-relocation-1.3722564

[247] Edgar and Sigre were the event organizers who became friends after he introduced Tompel, a business administration and marketing executive, to Mexican Huichol history and culture during a visit to Mexico. The two forged a strong friendship and Sigre, imbued with a desire to reconnect to her own cultural roots and traditions, returned to Estonia with Edgar to offer him the opportunity to discover Estonian indigenous culture and history. The idea to create a mural festival to celebrate their respective countries and cultures occurred after their shared journeys of discovery from Mexico to Estonia.

[248] http://mextonia.com/story.html

[249] Ibid.

[250] http://mextonia.com/

[251] Participating artists in the 2017 Estonia side of Mextonia were XCXIIV (MEX), Victor Lopez (MEX), Väino Õun (EE), Vahur Agar & Helena Hanni (EE), Tania Quezada (MEX), Silver Kivirand (EE), Silver "SBoy" Seeblum (EE), Siim Kasemaa (EE), Sermob (MEX), Sens (MEX), Seifo (EE), Sänk (EE), Reyben (MEX), Ricardo Moste (MEX), Renata Mtz (MEX), Original Skillz (EE), Pintsel (EE), Piiritus (EE), PRKTR (EE), NEKI (EE), Mihkel Kosk (EE),

Martin Rattas (EE), Martin Roosna (EE), Margus Richard Talivee (EE), Kevin Poll (EE), Luis Sánchez (MEX), Karen S (EE), Katrina Kolk (EE), Izak One (EE), Jonky (MEX), Himed (MEX), Goal (MEX), Fer Arias (MEX), Farid Reuda (MEX), Fatsnail & Andrei Kedrin (EE), Erik Allaste (EE), Calladitos (MEX), Bert Norralt (EE), Benuz Guerrero (MEX), Bach BaBach (EE) Andreas Luigas (EE), Abril Pegueros (MEX), Aaron Glasson (NZ), Cinzah Merkins (NZ), Five8 (CA), and Boa Mistura (SP)

[252] https://stencibility.voog.com/festival-1

[253] http://balticsession.com/

[254] Tamm was the Director of the Institute of Cybernetics (1969-76), Rector of Tallinn University of Technology (1976-1991), and was a member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. In his later years he worked as a senior researcher at the Institute of Cybernetics where he had served as director years before. His work on computer modelling and programming helped to bridge the distance between artwork, audience, and the artist and articulate the philosophical and critical theoretical ideas of the cybernetic arts movement. Additional information from https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Tamm

[255] Although meant as a tribute to Tamm, Five8's mural appears to be more reminiscent of Paik's foundational work *9/23/69: Experiment with David Atwood (*1969). Collaborating with several engineers, musicians, video technicians, and artists, Paik's groundbreaking exhibit was a spontaneously produced single-channel video and sound installation of televisual and musical components which fused the signals and sounds into electronic abstractions of moving color and imagery. Paik's unprecedented exhibit influenced cybernetic artists for generations, including Five8, especially with concern to his own explorations in neon light art in the last several years, reminiscent of Paik's later video-neon installations from the 1990s. For more information see *Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S* (1995) exhibited in Smithsonian American Art Museum in Alaska, Hawaii. This is probably one of Paik's most recognized neon-video installations from which Five8 has been influenced towards developing some of his own applications of neon lighting in his art work.

[256] https://visittallinn.ee/eng/visitor/see-do/things-to-do/attractions-museums/179444/mextonia-ttu-tallinn-technical-university

[257] Aaron Glasson (NZ), Jason Botkin (CA), Nosego (USA), Mantra (FR), Sänk (EE), Sermob (MEX), Goal (MEX), Ryper (MEX), Renata Martínez (MEX), Demencia Beivide (MEX), Saúl Torbe (MEX), Miguel Valiñas (MEX), Smithe (MEX), Curiot Tlapazotl (MEX), Paola Delfín (MEX), Pogo (MEX), Tmuz (MEX), Atole Parra (MEX), the Xfamily (MEX), Benuz Guerrero (MEX), and master painter and muralists Jorge and Fernando Lucio (MEX). Only five artists were actually in both festivals – Aaron Glasson, Sänk, Sermob, Renata, and Goal. As well the core team for the Estonia and Mexico events numbered a total of 15 people, which is pretty impressive considering that these were both international events involving dozens of artists painting murals in a variety of conditions and circumstances. Smaller events with larger crews have not accomplished what these two conjoined festivals were able to pull off.

[258] Paola Delfin's mural on the northern section of the dome depicted the rain god Tláloc Zapoteca holding a sacrificial heart in his hands as he looks up to the heavens and life giving water pours from his mouth. Opposite of Delphins rain god Curiot Tlapazotl painted a rendition of the goddess of fertility, love, and fresh water Chalchiuhtlicue, who is also the consort of Tlaloc on the south section. Finally, on the western section of the dome Mantra painted a female figure inspired by the goddesses of nature and water with a quetzal on her shoulder and butterflies dancing in her hands. Opposite Mantra's mural on the eastern side of the dome Goal & Ryper painted a rendition of the great crocodile god Cipactli, who was symbolic of the earth floating across the cosmic and primeval waters.

[259] Pogo, Demencia Bievide, Torbe, Valiñas, Juez, Benuz Guerrero, Atole Parra & Sole, Renata, and Tmuz. Saúl Torbe and Paola Delfín collaborated with Tmuz at the end of the wall section to tie it all in together with some flora and fauna elements.

[260]Gofe, Smoke, Toes, Muek, Roy, Kererer, Cres, Evok, Snak Xoffe, and members of the renowned XFamiliaCrew http://nuevearteurbano.com/en/category/artistas/page/2/

[261] http://nuevearteurbano.com/en/

[262] Ibid.

[263] In May 2018 Jason did paint one final mural under the Pangea Seed banner in Austin, Texas to coincide with the *Sea of Change* retrospective print and art exhibition fundraiser, sponsored by Volcom Clothing. An online contest was held where artists could submit their respective works for consideration through the Pangea Seed web site. Selected prints would be exhibited at the Volcom shop/gallery/space and the winner would get the chance to paint at the next Sea Walls Festival event. Although the mural was used to promote the contest and exhibition, Jason was there just to paint with Aaron, whom he had struck up a good friendship with over the last few years. He was still working through some of his issues with the organization at this point but the idealist in him wanted to believe that the work he was doing with them was more than just self-indulgent. Their mural, *Crane Keeper*, the only one painted in connection with the exhibition, was meant raise awareness to the endangered whooping crane threatened by habitat loss and over-

hunting. In the artist's statement on the Pangea Seed web site, Jason's continued dedication for water based activism and his growing appreciation for indigenous knowledge and connection to the environment is evident. *"For the First Peoples of this region, the bird is an important symbol of peacemaking...In these times of escalating and unprecedented environmental loss, what part of these problems can each of us care for, taking personal responsibility to hold and protect even a small piece of the natural world? What can we learn from the original stewards of this place, and their intimate connection to the environment? Exploring the way we touch the land and water that supports our lives is a vital way to discover a powerful sense of self-worth, and a deeper spiritual connection to the planet.*" The print exhibition was held at the Volcom Garden in Austin, Texas, one of the company's retail location that sells outdoor clothing and equipment. Although a number of artists participated by producing original art or donating prints, the exhibition was partly eclipsed by Volcom's efforts at promoting its own brand which also left him questioning the value of his and other artists efforts.

[264] https://www.wbez.org/stories/why-chicagos-depression-era-school-murals-sparked-debates-about-art-and-politics-for-80-years/8afbc8a2-e301-40f5-a171-5ae021565630

[265] Originally intended to be installed side by side the former Lowell elementary school, both murals were separated when it closed its doors. *Child and Sports – Winter* was sent to Percy Julian Middle School in Oak Park while *Child and Sports – Summer went to* Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School.

[266] https://www.kqed.org/arts/13860237/this-is-reparations-s-f-school-board-votes-to-paint-over-controversial-high-school-mural

[267] https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/08/14/san-francisco-board-to-consider-plan-to-keep-divisive-mural/

[268] https://nonsite.org/open-letter-on-the-proposed-destruction-of-a-mural-cycle/

[269] https://hyperallergic.com/544353/george-washington-high-school-alumni-association-panel-washington-murals/

[270] Ibid.

[271] (Harvey 2012)

[272] Rogovin *founded* Public Art Workshop in 1972, a non-profit community art center and mural workshop in Chicago and co-founded the Peace Museum in 1981 where he served as director for 4 years. He also co-authored *Mural Manual: How to Paint Murals for the Classroom, Community Center, and Street Corner* (1975), and *Silhouette Murals* (1976). Currently he runs The Rogovin Collection LLC, which curates and manages his father's social documentary photography. He also spends time researching and writing about the history of left politics in Chicago and elsewhere. Crumpler continues to paint and has been an associate professor of painting at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) since 1989.

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Appendix

I Paint What I see

E.B. White

May 20, 1933

What do you paint when you paint on a wall?
Said John D's grandson, Nelson.
Do you paint just anything at all?
Will there be any doves, or a tree in fall?
Or a hunting scene, like an English ball?

"I paint what I see," said Rivera.

What are the colors you use when you paint?
Said John D's grandson, Nelson.
Do you use any red in the heart of a saint?
If you do, is it terribly red, or faint?
Do you use any blue? Is it Prussian?

"I paint what I paint," said Rivera.

Whose is that head that I see in my wall?
Said John D's grandson Nelson.
Is it anyone's head whom we know, at all?
If you do, is it terribly red or faint?
A Rensselaer, or a Saltonstall?
Is it Franklin D? Is it Mordaunt Hall?
Or is it the head of a Russian?

"I paint what I think," said Rivera.

I paint what I paint, I paint what I see,
I paint what I think, said Rivera
And the thing that is dearest in life to me
In a bourgeois hall is Integrity;
However…
I'll take out a couple of people drinkin'
And put in a picture of Abraham Lincoln;
I could even give you McCormick's reaper
And still not make my art much cheaper
But the head of Lenin has got to stay!
It's no good taste in a man like me,
Said John D's grandson, Nelson.
To question an artist's integrity
Or mention a practical thing like a fee,
But I know what I like to a large degree,
Tho art I hate to hamper.
For twenty-one thousand conservative bucks
You painted a radical. I say, shucks,
I could never rent the offices-
The capitalistic offices.
For this, as you know, is a public hall.
And people want doves, or a tree in fall,
And tho your art I dislike to hamper,
I owe a little to God and Gramper.
And after all,
It's my wall…
We'll see if it is, said Rivera.