

EN

EDITORIAL

Cultivating the conscience of the citizen's ego

As a judging activity, taste brings together culture and politics,
which already share the open space of the public realm.¹

Hannah Arendt

The modern city, inevitably complex, diverse, multicultural and in constant transformation, requires that any art intervention planned to take place within it be clear about how it fits with what is already there; this fit in no way assumes a hallowed respect for the pre-existing, nor, obviously, disrespect for the same. The time of the most disparate visionaries (artists, gallery owners, sponsors, critics, politicians, etc.) and the aesthetic eyesores they impose on the population should have long been permanently cancelled: no more kitsch please – whether it be the incarnation of ancestral identity values, the affectation of the reiterated historically outdated and exhausted, or the pursuit of the shock of the new per se. All too frequently artistic intervention in the urban space is the result of pressure from individual, corporate or institutional interests with the excuse and only criterion that it “is a gift to the city”.

We cannot conceive of the city as a blank canvas waiting to be filled with any piece of art understood as a spectacle of entertainment and consumption. Art, by definition, speaks to our emotion, our taste, our way of being in the world and our personal and collective development, and we must ensure that it continues to ask questions. This questioning is not without its tension, contradiction and conflict, and these need to be managed in a non-destructive way, in a dialectic of temporary improvements. The connotations for the community of urban art interventions must be taken into account without alienating the citizen: individual person and sole owner of civil rights.

The urban space constitutes the territory in which to develop the community functions of exhibiting, meeting, exchange, movement, trade, conversation... and the symbolic construction and representation of the reflection on what, as a society, we are, we claim to have been, and we plan to be in the future. The aesthetic perspective in every one of its aspects mainly defines the abovementioned functions, driving explicit decisions on how they are defined and undertaken, and on the responsibilities resulting from them. We are, thus, in the specific realm of politics in its most basic sense, namely, citizens' conversations about structuring and managing shared commons.

The contextualisation process therefore implies the participation of the agents involved in creation and execution, decision and government, user and citizen, in establishing the criteria and procedures to be used in this process. Some of these are:

How to address the specific sensibilities of different citizen cultures without sterilising proposals via the worst possible political correctness, or fragmenting space into isolated, sealed off ghettos.

How to avoid affectations and standardisations, or repetitions and acritical copies of urban art practices from other latitudes or periods.

How to prevent the proliferation and contamination of non-places and the aseptic neutrality they presume to bring with them.

1. Hannah Arendt (2007): *Reflections on Literature and Culture*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, page 202.



Experiencing the city is a multidimensional activity that creates meaning from the relational, and by establishing dynamic links among citizens, and between citizens and cultural objects. We must therefore generate, through argument and through sharing, justifiable criteria for selecting the cultural objects we want to incorporate into our common public space.

Castelló de la Plana. April 2016.