

## Urban Space Art and Social Resistance (Aarhus, 16–18 Apr 21)

Online / Aarhus University, Denmark, Apr 16–18, 2021

Deadline: Dec 31, 2020

Tijen Tunali, Colorado

### Art and the City: Urban Space, Art and Social Resistance

Art and the City: Urban Space, Art, and Social Resistance conference series bring together a team of international scholars with an interest in art and right to the city, aesthetics, and politics, cultural and artistic rebellion, aesthetics of social movements, and activist art in the urban space. The central goal of this “traveling conference” – each year in a different city in Europe – is to engage in a multifaceted, multi-disciplinary, and multi-geographic perspective to articulate and promote a richer and a more integrated understanding of the ideologies, relationships, meanings, and practices that arise from the diverse interactions among the three social spheres: urban space, art, and social movements.

Art’s role in the urban space of social mobilizations results in a multitude of spatial dynamics and emotional, communicative, and aesthetic interactions. Such urban creativity has a broad scope of interests from a clear “right to the city” perspective with its ecological, spatial, and ideological agenda to the struggles of civil rights, and individual and collective freedoms. While, this aspect of urban creativity has opened the research into recognizing street art as a genre for “political democratization” (Bengtson & Arvidson, 2014), the growing significance of art in social and spatial justice movements has not met with a rigorous academic undertaking.

Art had an essential part during the Egyptian and Tunisian revolution (Abaza 2012), Spanish Indignados (Ramírez Blanco 2018), the Greek Aganaktismenoi movement (Tsilimpoudini 2016), and the Gezi Uprising (Tunali 2018). It is even argued that the civil war in Syria is triggered by a graffiti work in Dara’a (Asher-Shapiro 2016). The socio-political character of these movements has been explored extensively from the point of plural resistance against the authoritative government, collective identity, and a political struggle over public space. This material emphasis has often focused on what was done, not what was made visible, despite the popular use of the urban space for immense creativity and the increasing influence of electronic mobility and communication networks that have helped the aesthetic strategies of the movements. On the other hand, most research related to the arts in social resistance, both from a social science perspective and from a community arts perspective, tends to emphasize the therapeutic, unitary, or reconciliatory attributes of art, paying attention to how art contributes to ease tensions between communities and city authorities. Although such criticism for socially engaged art is sound, it undermines art’s capacities of struggle and agonism, of contestation and re-appropriation that emerge through the creation of common and shared spaces for socialization, mobilization, and political action.

The increasingly visible aesthetic dimension of the recent political protests, revolts, and uprisings has not only challenged what is acceptable as politics in society, but it has also problematized what is acceptable in society as art (Tunali 2017). In the recent social movements, artistic practices, interventions, and performances, with the accompanying talks and manifestos, have further challenged the traditional political critique on the relationship between aesthetics and politics. In the current condition of the world connected through hegemonic discourses and authoritarian politics, which tend to erase the conditions that make democratic participation and grassroots mobilization possible, the political capacity of art that becomes a conditioning factor for social resistance is a fundamental and timely issue.

To push forward the dialogues and widen the debates on art's relationship to the political, Art and the City conferences interrogate what the reconfiguration of difference, equality, and equity entails present moment, and what it is to aesthetically and politically experience the world from the perspective of social dissensus and rebellion. Inspired by the visual outburst of the uprisings around the world between 2011 and 2014 and recently at the end of 2019, the overarching theme "Urban Space, Art and Social Resistance" envelops this year's following four tracks:

1. Art and everyday life in the city
2. Art and aesthetics of urban social movements
3. Urban space, art, and social crisis
4. Art and urban communities

The participants are invited to analyze the relationships between art and urban social struggle in various historical and local contexts. The proposed papers are expected to engage in questions such as:

- How are our perceptual and sensual encounters with the city's changing landscape shaped by art?
- What kind of political and aesthetic possibilities could emerge in the intersection of the dialogical premises of art and the ideological premises of political mobilization?
- In which ways art theory can relate to counter-hegemonic epistemologies of the urban space?
- Could aesthetics of occupation, communing and communality deployed in urban social resistance be the arena and context for political transformations?
- How could artistic expressions in the urban space reveal, delimit, question, and resist the complexity of the socio-political crisis?
- What kind of role do art narratives play in incorporating marginalized subjects and voices as dissidence?
- Under what conditions could art become effective in reclaiming the cities as sites of resistance and change?
- To what extent artistic interventions could subvert the established order in the
- How are symbols, slogans, and visual expressions communicated in the urban space of resistance?
- How do social movements deploy art and aesthetics?
- What can we learn from street art about visual resistance in the interplay with political power structures?
- How are the artistic strategies and performances in social movements transmitted to other local contexts?
- How can we analyze the political significance of art in increasingly militarized, policed, surveilled,

or otherwise controlled urban contexts?

- What is the role of music in street activism?

- How can art in the urban space be used as a tool of collaboration and a means of imagining alternative political communities?

There is no conference fee. Interested participants are requested to submit an abstract of maximum 500 words and a 2-page CV as one PDF document to the conference convener Tijen Tunalı [tijen.tunali@aiaa.au.dk](mailto:tijen.tunali@aiaa.au.dk) no later than January 31, 2021.

Selected papers will be invited to contribute to an edited volume.

#### Scientific Committee 2021

Konstantinos Avramidis, Architecture, University of Cyprus

Susana Jimenez-Carmona, Aesthetics and Politics, University of Barcelona

Nicholas Gamso, Art History, San Francisco Art Institute

Maciej Kowalewski, Sociology, University of Szczecin

Vittorio Parisi, Aesthetics, University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Catherine Preda, Political Science, University of Bucharest

Heather Shirey, Art History, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Tijen Tunalı, Art History and Visual Sociology, Aarhus University

Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies-AIAS

Aarhus University-Denmark

On-site and online

<https://artandthecity.sciencesconf.org>

#### Reference:

CFP: Urban Space Art and Social Resistance (Aarhus, 16-18 Apr 21). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 7, 2020 (accessed Sep 12, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/24079>>.