

## Art and the City: Urban Space Art and Social Change (online, 26–28 May 22)

online / Aarhus, Denmark, May 26–28, 2022

Registration deadline: Jan 31, 2022

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Art and the City: Urban Space, Art and Social Change

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Online and In-Person

Art and the City: Urban Space, Art, and Social Change conferences bring together a team of international scholars with an interest in art and the right to the city, urban creativity, aesthetics and politics, cultural and artistic rebellion, aesthetics of urban social movements, and rebellious art in the urban space. The central goal of this conference series is to critically engage in a multifaceted, multi-disciplinary, and multi-geographic perspective to articulate and promote a richer and 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 society.

Art's role in the urban space involves a multitude of spatial and temporal dynamics and constitutes emotional, dialogical, and aesthetic interactions. On the one hand, art assists in the improvement of urban development, tourism, public health, race relations, and even welfare. On the other hand, we observe that art lends its competencies to urban activism and social change from the 'right to the city' and anti-gentrification movements with their spatial, ideological, and ecological agenda to the struggles of civil rights, individual and collective freedoms.

Art has also an essential part in urban social movements, which are also referred to as 'square movements' during the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions (Abaza 2016, Le Vine 2015), 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 graffiti work in Dara'a (Asher-Shapiro 2016). Recently, the Black Lives Matter movement leaves its mark in the urban space with street murals in over 550 places across the US (Shirey, Heather, et al., 2020). The politico-aesthetic character of these movements has been explored extensively from the point of plural resistance against the authoritative government, the struggle over the appropriation and use of public space, structural and social inequalities, and human rights issues. However, these debates lack a specialized framework and language for contemporary art practice, which places urban space and its social urgencies at the center of its production.

Crucially, the recent discussions on the sociality of art emphasize the therapeutic, ethical, unitary, reconciliatory, and functional attributes of art, focusing on how art contributes to ease tensions between communities and city authorities. Although such criticism for art's engagement with social change 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 social-

ization, mobilization, and political action.

To push forward the dialogues and widen the debates on art's relationship to the political and the social, Art and the City conferences interrogate what it is to aesthetically experience the city from the perspective of social dissensus and democratic citizenship.

The overarching theme "Urban Space, Art, and Social Change" envelops this year's following four tracks:

1. Art and everyday resistance in the city
2. Art and aesthetics of urban social movements
3. Public arts, public space and democracy
4. Ecological resistance and arts in the city

The participants from all humanities and social sciences disciplines are invited to analyze the way art:

- is a part of the aesthetics of the urban social movements and their commitment to participative (direct) democracy.
- exists in the increasingly surveilled, designed, aestheticized and otherwise controlled urban contexts,
- confronts and reconstitutes the concept of public space,
- provides the citizenry with new and innovative ways to engage,
- activates, captures, and subverts the experience of the urban space,
- enables reflexive processes and co-creation of knowledge and worldview,
- reveals hegemonic and counterhegemonic interactions among city authorities, urban developers, and artists,
- empowers the resistance movements in the gentrified neighborhoods,
- accentuates potentials and disadvantages related to the interaction of eco-activism to urban ecologies.

The proposed papers should engage in questions such as:

- How can art transform our understanding of the politics of the urban space?
- How does the spatial politics of late neoliberalism demand and alter new interactions of the way artists and urban dwellers approach daily life in the urban space?
- How could artistic expressions in the urban space reveal, delimit, question, and resist the complexity of the socio-political crises?
- How are symbols, slogans, and visual expressions communicated in the urban space of resistance?
- 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?
- How can we analyze the political significance of art in increasingly policed urban contexts?
- What kind of role do urban 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?
- How are our perceptual and sensual encounters with the city's changing landscape shaped by art?
- How can art produce new narratives of social organization in the gentrified urban space?
- How does art engage in, facilitate, and make visible the actions and strategies of grassroots anti-

- gentrification activism?
- What can we learn from street art about visual resistance in the interplay with political power structures?
- How do artists get involved in urban social movements and how do urban social movements deploy art?
- How could street art be a critical tool for the visibility of a community in a time of crisis?
- How have been the artists interpreting and developing the aesthetic discourses and tactics that the recent urban social movements have produced?
- How are the artistic strategies and performances in urban social movements transmitted to other local contexts (e.g Las Thesis)?
- 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?
- Could aesthetics of occupation, communing and communality deployed in urban social movements be the arena and context for political transformations?
- How can the plurality of competing publics be a political and aesthetic reality of the urban public realm in late-capitalist societies?
- How can we develop ecocriticism towards urban landscapes?
- Which potentials, dilemmas and challenges characterize art's role in transforming the urban landscape towards the formation of an inclusive culture and inclusive urbanism?
- To what extent can participatory public arts increase social empowerment and be an important resource for enabling civil society engagement?
- What role does public art have to play under the precariously situated environmental consequences of neoliberal urban development?

#### CONFIRMED KEYNOTES

Prof. Henri Kaare Nielsen, Aesthetics and Culture, Aarhus University

Assoc. Prof. Josepha Wessels, Arts and Communication, Malmö University

Nikki Gamboa, California Institute of the Arts

There is no conference fee. Interested participants are requested to submit an abstract of a maximum of 500 words and a short CV to the conference convener Tijen Tunali [tijen.tunali@cc.au.dk](mailto:tijen.tunali@cc.au.dk) no later than January 31, 2021.

There is limited funding to cover the traveling costs of presenters. Selected papers will be invited to contribute to an edited volume.

#### SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE 2022

Isabel Carrasco Castro, Aesthetics, Boston University Madrid

Anna Dempsey, Visual and Performing Arts, University of Massachusetts

Henri Kaare Nielsen, Aesthetics and Culture, Aarhus University

Maciej Kowalewski, Sociology, University of Szczecin

Friederike Landau, Cultural Geography, Radboud Universiteit

John Lennon, English, University of South Florida

Alla Myzelev, Art History, the State University of New York at Geneseo

Caterina Preda, Political Science, University of Bucharest

Tijen Tunali, Art History, Aarhus University

Josepha Wessels, Arts and Communication, Malmö University

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