



## Lisbon Street Art and Urban Creativity International Conference 2017

### Miguel Honrado

The Secretary of State for Culture of Portugal

In the context of Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Conference 2017, I would like to congratulate the organization of the 4th Edition of this event; the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon for hosting once again this initiative; the other partners of this meeting. It is with great pleasure that the Ministry of Culture, through the Directorate-General for the Arts, supports this Conference.

Considering the intense programme announced for these three days of work, it is easy to confirm the relevance that this subject, connected with graffiti and street art, has come to gain as an object of study, for a very diverse academic environment, including several scientific areas, which I would classify as a multinational one, taking into account the origins of the participating researchers.

The subject is approached from many analytical perspectives and multiple plastic realities, which confirm the current richness of the urban art phenomenon, both in terms of its aesthetic, patrimonial, social, economic and political impact and of the fast pace characteristic of its evolution.

Mutations due to an effort of overcoming have always been crucial in the development of the visual arts. In the contemporaneity, Art History identifies multiple currents, movements, genres, techniques, materials, creating a ground for a profound aesthetic renewal that results from a certain sense of questioning of the inherent conditions of creativity.

There is an expansion of the self-awareness of discourses and the emergence of metalanguages; the questioning of the authorship as a set of individualistic and virtuous gestures; the rupture with the process of consigning the work of art through the institutional dimension, among other rupture positions that projects such as those by Marcel Duchamp or Joseph Beuys epitomize.

The latter author, by considering that each man is potentially an artist, by determining that the artistic is intrinsic to the nature of each individual, widens the spectrum of creativity, bringing it to the domain of citizenship, to the field of art, that asserts itself as an intervention of political nature.

In some ways, it may be in this context that the genesis of expressions associated with urban art is inscribed. Born in the late 1960s, early 1970s, in the cities of Philadelphia and New York, graffiti emerged as a self-taught and youthful medium, claiming for itself a status of subversive act, practiced on the street, illegally, and thus in anonymity, with the aim of territorial demarcation.

Initially distant from the conventionality of institutional places, these forms of expression claimed a presence in the public space, demanding for themselves the right of expression of those who, while not coming from the high culture world, wanted to give visibility to their work that would materialize, at the beginning, in something as simple as a name, a signature, a tag.

Yet today we are distant from this primordial reality, because transformations in the universe of graffiti swiftly came to light. New iconographies were outlined, new media were adopted, new techniques were aligned, generations of authors were positioned and the phenomenon became global.

More expanded fields, such as street art and even more broadly urban art, began to be defined. The trend generated by these manifestations became an urban subculture and almost inevitably emerged a progressive institutionalization of these plasticisms, marked by their presence in galleries and museological spaces, and even being exhibited in some of the most prestigious institutions worldwide.

The proliferation of research, publications and events dedicated to these artistic practices has reinforced the interest of city governments, sometimes through the openness to support urban art, as a strategy that could contribute to heritage safeguard, the improvement of the public space and the democratization of access to culture.

And here I could not fail to mention all the work developed by Lisbon City Council, congratulating Mrs. Catarina Vaz Pinto, City Councillor for Culture, for the project of the Urban Art Gallery. I believe that even at international level this is an emblematic case of a consistent and multifaceted investment on these expressions, with a relevant impact on the City of Lisbon.

The support offered by the Ministry of Culture to the International Conference of Street Art and Urban Creativity through the Directorate-General for the Arts, as mentioned above, reflects the strength, the range, the diversity and the notoriety that these expressions and their community have conquered in the present time.

We are effectively committed to the most recent visual manifestations, to a particular attention to the transformations of the cultural environment, to a desire for updating and comprehensiveness. This is an artistic field that we cannot fail to observe, seeking to reach its authors and the entities that have promoted a productive performance.

As a part of the visual arts landscape in the present, this should mean supporting more initiatives in the universe of urban art. For that, it would be important to have more applications to the support programmes for artistic activities promoted by the Directorate-General for the Arts, as part of a new model that will be launched in the second half of this year.

We believe that we can contribute to dignify and strengthen the careers within an artistic context as young and emergent as that of street art; to the reinforcement of the vitality and heterogeneity that characterize their languages today; to the reflection and debate they involve; to the role they currently play in the aesthetic experience of urban landscapes and also to the democratization of production and access to culture that urban art can clearly achieve.

Miguel Honrado  
The Secretary of State for Culture of Portugal