

Article

Murals and Graffiti in Ruins: What Does the Art from the Aliko Hotel on Naxos Tell Us?

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Abstract: This manuscript investigates the cultural and educational dimensions of murals and graffiti in the ruins of the Aliko Hotel on Naxos Island. Moving beyond their aesthetic value, these artworks are examined as conduits for complex sociocultural and educational discourses. Employing semiotic analysis, particularly informed by Roland Barthes' conceptual framework, the study offers a multi-layered interpretation of the significance of street art. A systematic approach guided the empirical data collection, entailing the careful selection and categorisation of 76 photographs, eventually honed down to 21 key images for detailed analysis. This set, comprising 6 murals and 15 graffiti pieces, was subjected to meticulous examination to discern both dominant themes and motifs ('studium') and the elements evoking personal connections ('punktum'), thereby facilitating emotional and intellectual engagement. The methodology of the study is tailored to uncover the collective narratives encapsulated within these visual forms, as well as the individual responses they provoke. It probes how personal interpretations are influenced by the viewers' beliefs and backgrounds, thereby expanding the semiotic analysis to encompass both shared and individual meanings. This balanced analytical approach deepens the understanding of visual expressions as dynamic interactions between the artwork and its audience. It underscores the transformative role of street art in urban environments and its contribution to public art discourse. The impending demolition of the Hotel Aliko ruins underscores the ephemeral nature of street art. The murals and graffiti, as transient custodians of cultural and social narratives, accentuate the fragile nature of this cultural heritage. This critical moment underscores the importance of documenting and preserving such art forms and the stories they encapsulate, highlighting their significant role in shaping community identity and cultural education.

Keywords: murals; graffiti; Naxos; culture; educational



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1. Introduction

As urbanisation advances, public spaces have transformed, becoming stages for diverse artistic expressions, notably murals and graffiti. These forms of art, rich in meanings and functions, have garnered extensive attention from researchers in sociology, anthropology, and educational culture (MacGill 2016). The importance of murals and graffiti transcends their artistic expression, impacting the territorial dynamics of cities (Mubi Brighenti 2010) and challenging public authorities and cultural values. They serve as alternative historical records and forms of citizenship expression (Morrison 2018).

The integration of graffiti and street art into the mainstream art market, as noted by Gartus and Helmut (2014), indicates a change in the perception of these art forms. Landry (2019) explored the implications of urban art regimes in the context of colonising public

spaces while recognising the liberating potential of graffiti. This highlights the evolving nature of social attitudes toward graffiti and murals.

The political significance of graffiti is revealed in Lerner's (2019) work, which analyses the co-optation of dissent in the context of political public art, especially during presidential elections in Russia. Lennon (2014) contextualises graffiti as a tool for revolutionary protest, examining its role in expressing revolutionary desires and challenging aesthetic norms.

Waldner and Dobratz (2013) explore graffiti as a form of controversial participation in political life, emphasising its sociological and political dimensions. This further highlights the multifaceted nature of graffiti as a form of expression and participation in social discourse.

The significance of street art and graffiti in redefining urban spaces is reflected in the broader context of sociocultural processes, offering promising theoretical and practical development perspectives for understanding the transformative power of public images in urban environments (Irvine 2012; Ospishcheva-Pavlyshyn 2021; Perzycka-Borowska et al. 2023).

One fascinating case that highlights these issues is the evolution of the Aliko Hotel ruins in Greece. This structure, originally designed as a luxury hotel, has transformed into a centre of street art. Murals and graffiti on its walls have become key elements in reinterpreting and redefining this space, reflecting the dynamic social and political changes in the local and global communities (Gralińska-Toborek 2019; Wang et al. 2020; Kapoor et al. 2021).

This article presents an analysis based on an interdisciplinary approach, combining perspectives from the fields of art, sociology, and cultural education (MacGill 2016). Our goal is to understand the complex processes of creating murals and graffiti and their impact on communities and urban spaces. This study fits into a broader discourse on the role of public art in shaping urban space and its significance for social well-being and identity, as presented by Perzycka-Borowska et al. (2023). Through the application of interdisciplinary methods and diverse theoretical perspectives, we aim to investigate how street art can serve as a catalyst for social and cultural changes in urban environments. By examining various aspects of murals and graffiti, from their aesthetic impact to their social and political functions, this work aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how these art forms contribute to shaping our cities and communities. This introduction serves as a foundation for further in-depth analysis and discussion of murals and graffiti as important elements of urban life, reflecting and influencing our sociocultural reality.

2. Historical Overview of the Aliko Hotel

The history of murals on the ruins of the Aliko Hotel on the Greek island of Naxos began in the late 1940s. This place, attracting the attention of art lovers and researchers from around the world, fascinates not only with its picturesque location but also with its deep historical context and the evolution of space over time. The street art found on the hotel premises represents a crossroads of inspiration for artists and enthusiasts who decided to give new meaning to the abandoned structure (Giakouvakis et al. 2020). The controversy around the building has found its finale in recent years, ending a decades-long conflict between Belgian investors and the local community, which never consented to the project's realisation.

The prototype of the complex, whose construction began in the late 1960s, was to be a luxury hotel with a thousand rooms. From the very beginning, this project was controversial, and its genesis was linked to the period of the "black colonels" junta rule, which took control of Greece after the coup in April 1967 (Clogg 2002, "A Concise History of Greece"). This was a period of disruption to Greece's democratic traditions and the country's slide into totalitarianism, resulting in political instability and corruption. It was then that Belgian investors, without proper permits, began the construction of the hotel complex in Aliko.

The controversy concerned not only the lack of construction permits but also fears related to the potential destruction of the natural beauty of the Aliko peninsula and the disruption of its ecosystem. Owing to the actions of the local community, which strongly opposed it, further construction work on the complex was stopped. An essential element

of the argument was the protection of the Cycladic cemetery on the Aliko site. Despite numerous abuses in the construction process, no one was held accountable. After the junta was overthrown in 1974, it came to light that the hotel did not meet formal requirements, which made its completion impossible. After years of dispute, the project was stopped and declared illegal, and the legal battle ended with the Supreme Court's verdict in 2010, rejecting the appeal of the Belgian investors. The decision to demolish the "Belgian Hotel" was made, and EUR 540,000 was allocated from European funds for this purpose as part of the "Actions for Environmental Balance" program.

Over the years, the abandoned complex has become a site of artistic exploration for street art creators, attracting the attention of artists and their audiences, thus giving Aliko International renown and making it a significant point on the tourist map of Naxos Island. Despite its illegal status and potential threats to the safety of visitors, the site continues to attract lovers of street art and ordinary tourists who want to experience this unusual and culturally significant place.

The murals and graffiti of the Aliko Hotel, like its legal status, are illegal. They were created without the required permits, making their presence a result of spontaneous artistic expression rather than an approved project. The legality of murals and graffiti depends on their commissions and compliance with legal regulations (Young 2014). Additionally, the legality of these artistic works is contingent on the permission of the property owner or government agency (Snyder 2009). In contrast, the legal consequences associated with the lack of such consent are significant (Iveson 2007). The conflict between the destructive nature of illegal street art and its significance for the community is also an important consideration (Chaffee 1993). Despite these controversies, some cities have begun to accept street art as a legal form of public art (MacDowall 2019).

The first murals in the Aliko ruins were created in 2015 by the Indonesian artist "Wild Drawing", who discovered the cultural potential of these places. His mural "Screams from the Depths of the Mediterranean" drew attention to the refugee drama, while his other works referred to mythology, social issues, and nature. Although weather conditions have led to the gradual fading of these works, Aliko's artistic legacy remains an important testimony to cultural memory and the impact of street art on society. Actions aimed at preserving and archiving this artistic heritage are advisable to perpetuate the memory of this important place.

The history of murals in the abandoned Aliko Hotel complex on Naxos Island is a fascinating story of time, culture, and social controversies. From the illegal start of construction during the junta rule to the decision to demolish the structure, the murals became a key testimony of artistic expression. Although sometimes illegal, street art in Aliko plays a significant role in shaping the cultural memory of the community, reminding us of the lasting impact of art on society.

3. Methodological Basis of the Study of Murals in the Aliko Hotel in the Context of Barthes' Theory

Semiotics, as the science of signs, offers comprehensive tools for analysing the ways in which images—in this case, murals and graffiti—communicate meanings in culture. Roland Barthes' (1980, 2020) theory, which focuses on the analysis of cultural signs and their multilevel interpretation, is extremely useful in studying street art, allowing for an understanding of its complex sociological, pedagogical, and cultural dimensions.

For a comprehensive analysis, several academic sources were used, providing insight into the identification and interpretation of rhetorical figures in street art, in line with the emphasis on semiotics and interpretation of cultural signs (Stampoulidis and Bolognesi 2019). Additionally, Ayan (2021) offers a relevant perspective on street art as a form of translation, which can be valuable in understanding the communication of meanings through murals and graffiti (Ayan 2021). Moreover, Jazeri and Susanto (2020) discuss the interaction between text and cultural experiences, resonating with the emphasis on understanding the cultural dimensions of street art (Jazeri and Susanto 2020). Furthermore,

Stampoulidis and Bolognesi (2019) present a cognitive-semiotic approach to the history of resistance in Greek street art, which could contribute to understanding the sociological, educational (Olteanu and Campbell 2018; MacGill 2016), and cultural dimensions of street art, in line with the study's objectives (Stampoulidis 2019).

3.1. Empirical Material Collection

At the outset of our study, a systematic approach was adopted to gather empirical material, primarily focusing on the collection of photographic evidence. This corpus of visual data comprised images of murals and graffiti located at the Aliko Hotel. The photographs, captured by the four authors of this manuscript, constitute a primary source of our empirical investigation.

A total of 76 photographs were meticulously selected for the analysis, following specific criteria for relevance and clarity. These images were subsequently categorised based on the recurrence of common motifs, facilitating a structured and thematic analysis (as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2). The initial phase of our examination began with a subset of 26 photographs (detailed in Appendix A). Following a rigorous selection process, this number was refined to 21 photographs (also listed in Appendix A), which effectively represented the diversity of the subject matter, encompassing 6 murals and 15 graffiti.

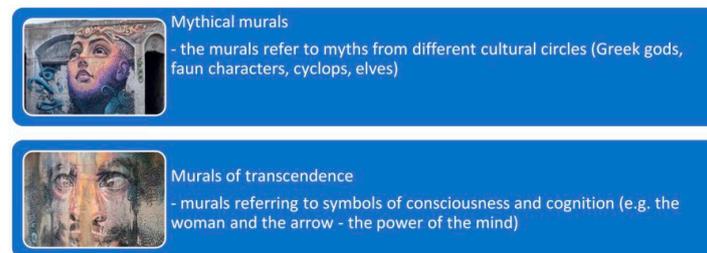


Figure 1. Division of murals by subject. Source: own study.

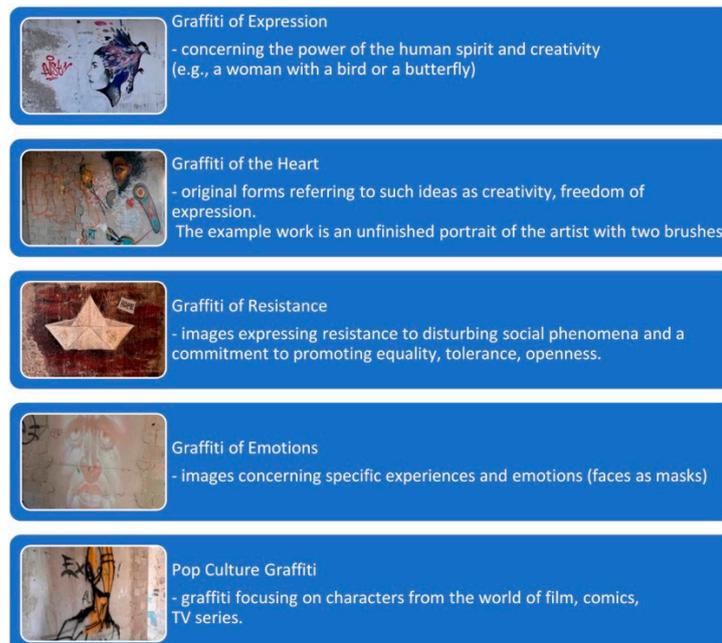


Figure 2. Graffiti division by subject. Source: own study.

These selected images served as the foundational basis for our analysis, enabling us to explore the intricate patterns, themes, and symbolism inherent in these art forms. The methodological rigour applied in the selection and categorisation of these photographs

underscores the systematic approach of our study, ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the visual landscape under investigation.

3.2. *Semiotic Analysis in the Context of “Studium” and “Punktum”*

Roland Barthes (1980, 2020), in his seminal works, developed the concepts of ‘studium’ and ‘punktum’, which serve as essential tools in our interpretation of these forms of street art. The application of these concepts enables us to delve into both the universal and personal dimensions embedded in the murals and graffiti showcased at the Aliko Hotel.

‘Studium’ encompasses the cultural, social, political, and historical context within which murals are situated. In our analysis, this concept facilitates a comprehensive understanding of murals, examining themes, styles, execution techniques, and their contextual significance, as exemplified by their placement in the Aliko Hotel.

Conversely, ‘punktum’ represents the personal, subjective aspect that captures the observer’s attention and elicits an emotional response. This element of interpretation is inherently individual, often eluding a universal definition, and transcends mere intellectual comprehension. Our analysis of the Aliko Hotel’s murals seeks to identify those components that resonate on a personal level, provoking emotional or reflective reactions.

In analysing the photographs, we aimed to address the following questions:

What are the general themes and motifs presented in the murals and graffiti? (studium)

What elements of these artworks relate to broader social, cultural, or historical contexts? (studium)

Is there any specific detail that attracts attention or provokes a strong emotional response? (punktum)

How do personal experiences and beliefs influence interpretation? (punktum)

This analysis, which combines both objective and subjective aspects of interpretation, allowed for a fuller understanding and appreciation of the murals and graffiti.

Our study provided a novel perspective on the analysis of the murals of the Aliko Hotel. With this methodology, we were able to move beyond the traditional framework of semiotic analysis, including both objective and subjective aspects of the murals. Such an analysis highlights the multidimensionality and depth of street art, which often remains elusive in more traditional research methods. The adopted methodology also has significance for obtaining a broader understanding of visual culture (Irvine 2012). Through the exploration of both universal meanings (studium) and personal, unique points of resonance (punktum), our study points to the complexity and richness of meanings contained in murals, significantly influencing the interpretation and valuation of public art.

4. Analysis of Murals and Graffiti in the Space of the Aliko Hotel

4.1. *Dialogues of Art*

In the ruins of the Aliko Hotel, murals and graffiti create a unique open-air gallery, a space for free artistic expression and the sharing of personal thoughts, irrespective of social, economic, or cultural barriers. It is a place where everyone can leave a mark, interacting with the work of others.

Abandoned ruins are harmoniously incorporated into the landscape of nature, encompassing a cedar forest and a sandy beach. During our analysis of the visual messages advertising the ruins of Aliko, we identified several categories of murals and graffiti. Murals and graffiti were divided into two categories: murals, thoughtful and planned works; and graffiti (Figures 1 and 2), characterised by greater spontaneity and immediacy. Additionally, we focus on forms of interactive art that engage viewers, emphasising the interactive nature of this artistic space.

In the Aliko Hotel ruins, murals are predominantly located in visible places on the external walls of the complex and thus are attracting increased amounts of attention. Graffiti can be found mainly in less visible or hidden places in the Aliko Hotel (inside the ruins), as it is treated as an unauthorised marking of public space (Snyder 2009). In contrast to murals,

graffiti often has a more personal and spontaneous character (Young 2014), covering a wide range of topics from simple tags to the expression of social or political opinions.

Graffiti art is a controversial form of expression that has received little empirical assessment of its aesthetic value (Chamberlain et al. 2020). Despite its widespread presence, graffiti is still controversial due to its historical association with vandalism and criminal acts (Szubielska and Ho 2021). The perception and evaluation of modern art and graffiti art are influenced by visual context (Irvine 2012) and individual differences, leading to strong emotional responses and debates about its impact on neighbourhoods (Gartus and Helmut 2014). The negotiation of moral geographies in the context of graffiti and street art challenges assumptions about these art forms and their societal implications (McAuliffe 2012). In some communities, graffiti is considered a form of art, leading to the need for careful wording in research instruments to avoid misinterpretation (Binet et al. 2019). Graffiti has been studied as a textual practice that constructs narratives about communities and broader global contexts (Carrington 2009). The meanings of graffiti and its relationship with municipal administration have been explored, challenging stereotypical views of graffiti artists (Halsey and Young 2002). The social space of graffiti artists is characterised by open and hidden polarisation effects, reflecting their efforts to manifest their position and presence (Śliwerski 2021). The spatial politics of street art, especially in post-Revolution contexts, have been examined to understand its role in visible dissent (El-Shewy 2020). The semiotic approach to the study of graffiti has highlighted the lack of a single point of view on this phenomenon, emphasizing its complexity and diverse interpretations (Chamberlain et al. 2020).

The interactive art in the ruins of the Aliko Hotel is a unique form of street art that invites audiences to direct participation. The walls of the Aliko Hotel contain elements that encourage the public to add their own creations or changes, creating a dynamic and continuously evolving mural or graffiti. This interaction takes various forms, from writing comments to adding new images or symbols and transforming the image into a living, cocreated project. This form of expression demonstrates the power of art as a tool for social interaction and collaboration, emphasising its role in engaging and activating the community.

4.2. Mythical Murals

The experimental character of the artworks in the ruins of the Aliko Hotel lends this place a unique atmosphere, highlighting its distinctiveness. Mythology, as the cradle of narratives and archetypes, provides a platform where a dialogue between the past and the present, between reality and metaphysics, takes place. This category, saturated with eternal symbols and motifs, allows space for a multidimensional interpretation of each mural. The walls of the hotel resonate with the echoes of ancient myths, which can be seen as symbolic, considering that according to ancient Greeks, the island of Naxos is the birthplace of Zeus, the ruler of Olympus.

In the ruins of the Aliko Hotel, the sacred mixes with the profane. In addition to natural motifs (birds, horses, and monkeys), there are also references to religion (Hinduism), as well as Greek (Olympian gods, and the figure of a faun), Norse (elves), and Chinese mythology (the image of a dragon as a symbol of power and empire).

A particularly striking impression is made by the impressive 3D mural by Wild Drawing titled "The Third Eye" (Figure 2). The mythical figure resembles a cyclops, which, through the technique of photorealism, seems to penetrate through the walls. However, the symbolic third eye also refers to Norse mythology or Hindu beliefs, where it represents omniscience and extrasensory perception. The Elf Figure (Figure 3), on the other hand, evokes both mythology and fantasy literature, especially the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. The artist chose warm, vibrant colours to depict this joyful character. The diversity of colours and textures used to represent the flowers in the child's wreath contrasts with the more muted and uniform colours of the background. The use of light and shadow gives the

image depth and distinctly separates the child's figure from the raw surroundings of the ruins, which form the backdrop for the mural.



Figure 3. Sea Breeze, author of the mural: WD. Author of the photo: Dorota Hrycak-Krzyżanowska.

Another interesting example is the mural titled “Sea Breeze” by WD (Wild Drawing). The image depicts a mysterious figure that is reminiscent of a goddess emerging from sea waves (Figure 3). This mural is an example of urban art that engages viewers not only visually (Kazanowski 2018) but also intellectually. It is a work open to interpretation that can serve as a catalyst for reflection on the relationship between humans and nature, as well as our role in environmental protection. In a broader context, the mural can be viewed as a commentary on the long cultural history in which the sea has always played a central role in the human imagination.

In the detailed analysis of these three murals, we focused on describing the *studium* and *punktum*. This method allows for a deeper understanding of both the general context (*studium*) and the individual, emotional impact of these works on viewers (*punktum*).

In the “Sea Breeze” mural (Figure 3), the artist employs a vivid colour palette, where the dominant blues evoke the fluidity and depth of the sea, while the purples and flesh tones in the depiction of the goddess's face add a touch of realism and warmth. This careful choice of colours not only highlights the ethereal quality of the figure but also harmonises with the mural's thematic focus on nature and mythology. The painting technique appears to combine elements of realism with surrealist abstraction, visible in the detail of the waves and their interaction with the figure.

The woman/goddess's gaze is directed toward the sky, which may symbolise the search for greater knowledge or a desire for transcendence. This evokes images from Greek myths where the sea was a gateway to another world, the realm of Poseidon and other mythical creatures.

This mural can be interpreted as an allegory of nature and its untamed power. The goddess emerging from it can be seen as a representation of Mother Nature, reminding us of the human connection to the sea and our dependence on the natural world. In the context of contemporary discussions about climate and ecological crises, murals can provoke reflections on human impacts on seas and oceans.

In the “*studium*” of the mural, the maritime and mythological elements coalesce, creating a cultural narrative that is understandable on multiple levels and appealing to both local myths and universal themes. The colours and forms of the mural evoke mythical associations with goddesses and sea creatures. In the “*punktum*” of this work, the intense gaze of the figure may attract the viewer, creating a moment of personal encounter with the extraordinariness and depth of the message. This gaze can also act as a medium for personal reflections on inner and outer journeys, which are common to many cultures and spiritual traditions. Subtle details, such as the spiral pattern, may evoke personal reflections inspired by themes of transformation and spiritual awakening.

“The Third Eye” (Figure 4) depicts a male figure with a characteristic, centrally placed eye on the forehead, which draws attention and forms the composition's axis. We can

observe a complex composition combining two parts into one whole, creating a three-dimensional effect. The colour palette is limited but intense and dominated by cool shades of blue and grey, contrasting with the warm skin tone of the figure. The artist utilises the technique of photorealism, which gives the mural a three-dimensional and lifelike quality, extending beyond the wall's surface.



Figure 4. The Third Eye, author of the mural: WD. Author of the photo: Dorota Hrycak-Krzyżanowska.

The central third eye is a significant symbol in many cultures and spiritual traditions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, where it is considered an energy point associated with intuition and extrasensory perception. In Greek culture, myths symbolise omniscience, often associated with the Olympian god Zeus. In the Western context, the third eye can also be understood as a metaphor for inner insight and enlightenment.

This work can be interpreted as a call to seek deeper knowledge and inner truth. The male figure may symbolise the human quest for understanding, culminating in enlightenment, represented by the third eye. In this sense, the mural becomes an expression of a spiritual journey and the search for authenticity.

In the “studium” of the mural, the combination of realistic elements with mythological symbols creates a narrative about the pursuit of knowledge beyond the material world. Placed in the ruins, the work may also refer to transience and renewal, emphasising the cyclicity of life and humanity’s continual desire to regain lost wisdom.

The “punktum” of this mural, the centrally placed eye, acts like a magnet for the observer’s gaze. It evokes a sense of direct communication with the figure and becomes a personal point of encounter with the message of the work. This eye may express pivotal moments in an individual’s life, such as moments of decision or epiphany.

The mural “Elf Figure” (Figure 5) is perceived as a celebration of life and its cyclical nature. The child, traditionally seen as a symbol of beginning and potential, is depicted in the context of ruins, which may suggest the uninterrupted continuity of life and constant renewal and hope, even in the face of decline and destruction. In this contrast, the mural speaks of the resilience of the human spirit and the optimism that can be found even in the most abandoned and forgotten places. The wreath of flowers is a universal symbol of vitality, beauty, and growth, but it can also refer to traditions and rituals. The child’s smile, carefree and bright, may remind us of the simplicity and purity often attributed to childhood.

The “studium” of this mural is its ability to evoke universal associations with childhood, nature, and the joy of life. Its placement in ruins, which may symbolise transience, gives it an additional dimension. In the “punktum” of this work, the child’s smile acts as an emotional moment that speaks directly to the observer, evoking personal feelings such as joy, nostalgic memories, or even reflection on the transience of life. This mural, in its simplicity, possesses a profound ability to resonate with the viewer. It portrays innocence

and joy in the context of the larger cycle of life and death, a theme that is universal and perpetually relevant. Its brightness and optimism can counterbalance the surrounding decay, reminding us of the ongoing presence of life and hope.



Figure 5. The figure of an elf, author of the mural: WD. Author of the photo: Dorota Hrycak-Krzyżanowska.

The “myth” category for these murals is deeply justified. It refers not only to the content depicted in the artworks but also to the function that this art serves in the public space—it becomes a medium for conveying universal truths, which, like myths, are continuously reinterpreted and rediscovered by successive generations. These murals resemble contemporary hieroglyphs and are waiting to be deciphered by visitors to the ruins of the Aliko Hotel. They encourage reflection on one’s own life stories woven into the broader tapestry of human experience.

4.3. Murals of Transcendence

Each mural, anchored in the raw concrete of the hotel’s decay, is a testament to human creativity and a mirror reflecting the multifaceted nature of existence. In the presence of shadows and light (Barthes 2020), form and emptiness, these murals use the power of gaze, the strength of symbolism, and the intensity of colours to convey themes that are both timeless and immediate. They are not static images but dynamic entities that engage the viewer in a silent dialogue, prompting introspection and deep connection. The eyes gazing out from the walls are not just visual anchors but windows to the soul, pointing to the layered complexity of each of us. The patterns and motifs swirling around these central figures suggest the interconnectedness of all things, the dance of the cosmos to which we all belong.

Delving into the analysis and interpretation of each work, we discover how the “murals of transcendence” express the elusive aspects of our reality—how they reflect our inner struggles, our joys, and the eternal search for meaning beyond the tangible world—from the limits of knowledge to the labyrinths of madness.

The murals differ in form and artistic expression, but they are united by the achieved effect of illusion. This is evident, for instance, in the works of the artist known as WD. In the “expectancy” mural (Figure 6 depicts the side profile of a woman’s face), an entrance door is located where the character’s head is, creating an optical illusion and giving the impression that one could peer into the character’s thoughts. This may symbolise an invitation to understand another person’s inner world.

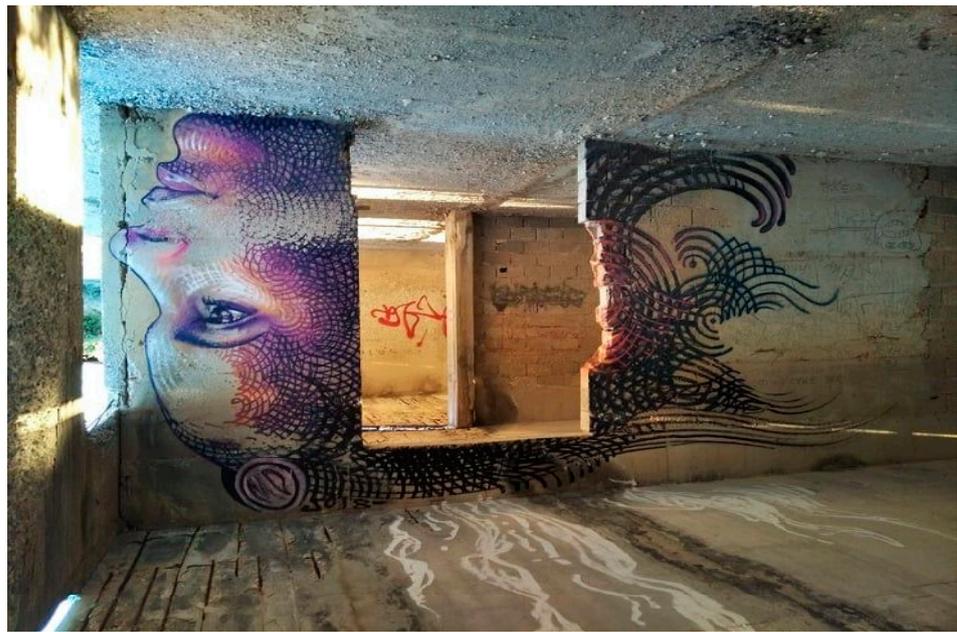


Figure 6. Expectancy, mural author: WD. Author of photo: Dorota Hrycak-Krzyżanowska.

A similar effect of illusion is observed in the “madness” mural (Figure 7), where an allegorical representation of madness materialises as a man with a split face, which can be interpreted as a psychological conflict or the beginning of mental disintegration. The fragmentation of the image becomes a tool for exploring the instability of the mind, introducing the observer into a state of uncertainty and dualism of perception. Furthermore, the illusion that splits the character’s face in half leads to a division of the image.

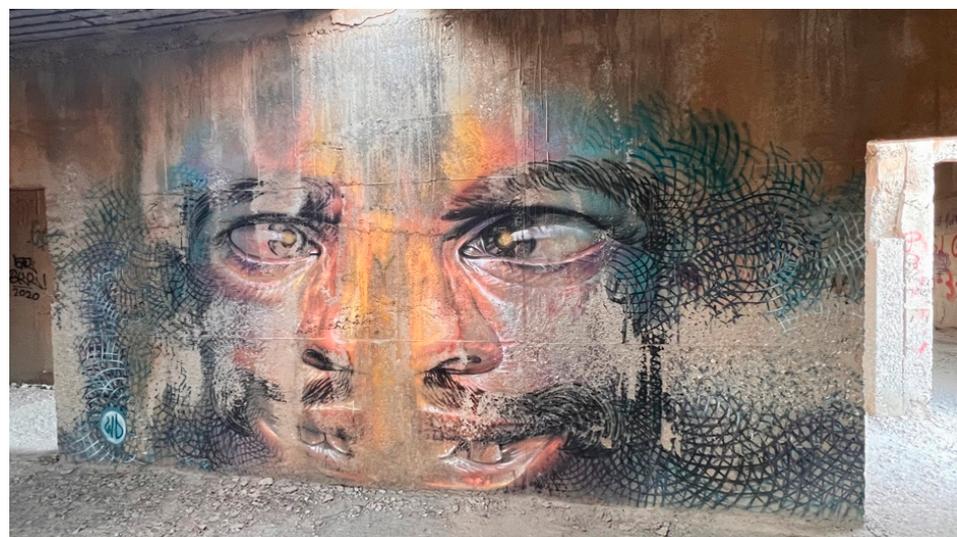


Figure 7. Madness, author of the mural: WD. Author of the photo: Dorota Hrycak-Krzyżanowska.

Within the same complex, Kostas Louzis, also known as Skitsofrenis, who was inspired by Banksy’s work, explored individual fates through mural art. In 2019, the artist created two murals in the Aliko ruins, using expressive colours to give a new dimension to forgotten spaces and revive their hidden potential. His mural “Bang, bang I shot you down” (Figure 8) is an allegory of the power of the human mind, where the image of a woman with a bow and arrow, releasing an arrow from the woman’s head, symbolises thinking as a form of effective weapon. It becomes a symbolic representation of thought as a tool for influence

and change. The artist experiments with vivid colours to give depth to the forgotten ruins and highlight their hidden potential.



Figure 8. Bang, bang I thought you down, author of the mural: Skitsofrenis. Author of photo: Dorota Hrycak-Krzyżanowska.

The “Murals of Transcendence” are not only artistic interpretations of human experiences but also serve as a platform for contemplating the complexity of human experience, the power of imagination, and the unlimited possibilities of the mind.

By examining the murals, we noticed the depth of the artist’s message. In the mural “Madness” (Figure 7), we observe the transcendent aspect of human nature, manifesting itself in the rich texture and expression of the face. Compositionally, the mural focuses on the face, especially the eyes of the figure, which are depicted in extraordinary detail. The dynamics of the gaze are emphasised by contrasting lines and shapes that seem to emanate from the eyes, creating a halo of complex patterns and textures. These patterns, perhaps intentionally reminiscent of neural networks, may symbolise the complexity of the human mind and the richness of the internal world of the portrayed person. Differences in texture and layering can affect the perception of the viewer, suggesting metaphorical layers of personality or experiences that shape a person. The lines and patterns are not just visual elements (Lennon 2014) but symbolic reflections of the inner, intangible reality that extends beyond what is visible. In psychology and art, the gaze is often interpreted as an expression of emotions and internal states, and in this case, it may symbolise the search for truth or confrontation with reality. In a sociocultural context, murals can impact issues of identity through contemporary discussions about individuality and the place of the individual in society. The patterns radiating from the eyes may symbolise the impact a person has on his or her surroundings, as well as how external forces shape individual perceptions and experiences.

The “punktum”, embodied by the intense, almost penetrating gaze, evokes a deep resonance with the inner experiences of the observer. This gaze, full of life and emotion, invites personal interpretation and contemplation, offering viewers the opportunity for introspection and finding echoes of their own experiences in a universal story. The mural opens the door for the viewer to personal reflection and spiritual understanding, encouraging consideration of the universal aspects of human experience.

This mural can be seen as a visual meditation on the nature of human consciousness and identity. Its technique, richness of textures, intense gaze, and use of symbolism collectively create a work of high scientific and artistic value, encouraging reflection on the inner life of a person and their place in the social fabric. This approach exemplifies how art

can act as a catalyst for deep intellectual and emotional engagement, prompting the viewer to ponder the complexity of human existence.

The “expectancy” mural (Figure 6) depicts a woman’s profile, which merges with the surrounding architecture, creating an optical illusion and interaction with the space. The visual fusion of the human figure with the building may symbolise the connection between the individual and the social structures in which they operate. The application of colour gradients from dark to lighter shades of purple attracts the eye and suggests the depth and multidimensionality of the character. The woman’s profile, being the central element of the composition in contrasting shades of purple, may symbolise the diversity of roles and social expectations that women face.

The “studium” of the mural may refer to the deliberate use of space and form, where the human face and the door have been integrated, creating an illusion of a divided personality or hidden path. This can be interpreted as a metaphor for the divided paths of human life or the mythical concept of Janus—the Roman god with two faces looking in opposite directions, symbolising beginnings and endings, past and future. A door opening at the level of the ear might suggest readiness to receive new ideas or inspirations, and the delicate texture of the hair may reflect the complex nature of thoughts and emotions. The details and colours of the mural, along with the fluid lines and patterns, suggest dynamism and movement, adding depth and life to the portrait. The complexity of the composition can be interpreted as a representation of the multidimensionality of human personality and its connection to the broader world, where the boundaries between the inner and outer regions are ambiguous and fluid. The dotwork technique used to create the texture of the mural, which builds the image using dots, might be interpreted as reflecting the digital nature of the contemporary world in which we live. Moreover, the dynamics of the undulating lines emerging from the figure might represent the impact an individual has on their surroundings or the flow of energy and thoughts.

The “punctum” of this mural might be hidden in the way the doors pass through the face, creating a symbolic separation of the character. This could suggest themes of tearing or duality of existence, referring to mythical stories of transformation. It might also symbolise transition, a spiritual journey, or a breakthrough in perception. A door opening at the level of the ear might symbolise openness to listening to deeper, perhaps even elusive, truths. The lace-like texture of the hair might evoke associations with the delicacy and complexity of human nature, bringing an element of subtlety to the powerful expression of the work.

The mural, as an artistic medium in public space, serves not only an aesthetic function but also an educational function, encouraging dialogue on art, psychology, and society. The interpretation of this mural demonstrates how art can be used to explore and express complex aspects of human nature and how it interacts with the external world.

The mural “Bang, bang I shot you down” (Figure 8) by Skitsofrenis may reflect themes of conflict and inner struggle, as suggested by the title. The artist employed a limited colour palette, where the blue background contrasts with the more neutral shades of the figure, which may symbolise various emotional or spiritual states. The painting technique, which combines realistic and abstract elements, allows for the creation of a sense of depth and three-dimensional nature.

The woman’s profile is dynamic and sophisticated, with delicate lines creating subtle facial expressions, possibly symbolising the dynamics of thought and emotion. The arrow emerging from the woman’s head could be a metaphor for a creative outburst, intellectual message, or the power of thought. It also alludes to the idea that ideas can be powerful and influential and as potent as arrows shot from a bow. The text on the mural, “Bang, bang, I shot you down”, is a direct reference to a song popular in mass culture but can also be interpreted as a reflection of the power of words and their impact on the individual and society. The choice to place the words emanating from the woman’s mouth may suggest that the word is the character’s statement, perhaps expressing her inner strength or commentary on her personal experiences.

The “punktum” of this mural might be found in subtle detail, such as how the arrow is positioned in the mural. It could also be a particular visual element that speaks to the viewer on a personal level—perhaps it is the woman’s facial expression, conveying the intensity of the moment or focus, leading the observer into a state of reflection on their own experiences and challenges.

In the discussed murals (Figures 6–8), a common theme of seeking deeper meaning and transcendence can be observed. Each work engages the observer in a dialogue where the “studium” reflects cultural and emotional aspects of human experience and the “punktum” initiates personal experiences. Murals may serve as social commentaries, and these specific examples may relate to themes such as the articulation of women’s voices in society, the power of words in shaping reality, or the role of women as guides of ideas and change. A blue background, often associated with calmness and stability, might symbolise inner peace or contrast with the dynamic message of the figures (Rolston 2018). All works, though different in form and expression, are united by thematic depth and a tendency to explore inner states of consciousness and identity, expressing both personal and universal experiences of human existence.

4.4. Graffiti of Expression

The motif of women’s faces in graffiti art, frequently accompanied by avian imagery, encapsulates a profound allegorical and spiritual resonance. These depictions transcend conventional portraiture, functioning as multifaceted allegories that encapsulate a spectrum of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual states. The recurrent bird motif in these artworks is not merely decorative but imbued with rich symbolic connotations. Birds, within this context, are emblematic of freedom, creativity, and spiritual transcendence, drawing upon cultural associations that link avian figures with the spiritual realm, the essence of life, and the inevitability of death.

The bird, a key element in many of these works, serves as a metaphorical medium through which freedom of spirit, creativity, and limitless spaces of imagination are manifested. In many beliefs, birds have also been related to the spiritual realm and life and death (the stork as a harbinger of birth, and the raven as a harbinger of death). Additionally, research in art and iconography has delved into the visual symbolism of animals, such as birds, in prehistoric and indigenous art, providing insights into their cultural and spiritual connotations (Ottalagano 2022). The image of the bird and woman has also been associated with the soul, which penetrates and can leave the body like breath (McAuliffe 2012; Majerczyk 2004). In this interpretation, the face of a woman with a bird on her head can be seen as visual poetry, transcending the boundaries of the body and suggesting spiritual connections of the soul with the cosmos, as well as the cycle of life and death.

In the ruins of the Aliko Hotel, there are two graffiti featuring the motif of a woman and a bird. Both were created by Skitsofrenis (Figures 9 and 10). The only change is in the facial expressions of the characters. In the first case (Figure 9), the woman’s facial expression is decisive, and the bird is very expressive, as if she wants to break free. This is emphasised by contrasting colours. The “studium” of this graffiti can interpret the female figure with bird elements as a symbol of freedom or transformation. The way the bird motif seems to be both part of and an extension of the character suggests a connection between the human and natural world, emphasising the idea of symbiosis or spiritual elevation. The “punktum” of this graffiti could be focused on the feathers that smoothly transition into the woman’s hair, creating a visual play between the human and natural. This detail may attract the viewer’s attention, provoking reflection on the connection between the beauty of the human and the natural world, symbolising unity and harmony. It may also suggest transformation or spiritual development, where feathers, typically associated with flight and the sky, might symbolise aspiration to higher spheres of existence or the desire for freedom.



Figure 9. Title unknown, graffiti author: Skitsofrenis. Author of photo: Dorota Hrycak-Krzyżanowska.



Figure 10. Title unknown, graffiti author: Skitsofrenis. Author of photos: Dorota Hrycak-Krzyżanowska.

In the graffiti depicted in Figure 10, the woman's face does not express emotion, and the bird more closely adheres to her head, as if it were a hair ornament or part of her hairstyle. Together, they form an inseparable whole. The "studium" of the graffiti once again combines the image of the woman with bird motifs, emphasising the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. Feathers, which smoothly transform into hair, can symbolise the coexistence and interdependence of both realms. The delicacy and details of this image may suggest the beauty and fragile balance between the human experience and the natural world. The symbiosis of the woman and the bird may suggest transformation, freedom of spirit, or rising above everyday problems. Feathers as hair can symbolise thoughts flying high, toward dreams and aspirations. This is an image full of

poetic allusions, where human and animal characteristics combine, creating a clear message about the unity of all living things.

The “punctum” of this graffiti can be captured in the intimate interaction of humans with nature. This might be a moment that attracts the viewer’s attention and provokes personal reflections on the relationship with the natural world, as well as the connections that bind us to it.

Another intriguing element is the motif of a woman’s face with butterfly wings (Figure 11). In this case, we also see a side profile of the face. The woman’s hair is hidden under a two-coloured head covering. Only after a moment do we realise that these are actually butterfly wings, evoking associations such as the transience and fleeting nature of life but also hidden beauty and metamorphosis. The “studium” of this mural represents the profile of a woman from which half of a butterfly seamlessly emerges. The use of a monochromatic palette for the face, in contrast with the vibrant colours of the butterfly, may symbolise the connection of human nature with the beauty and transformation that the butterfly represents. The butterfly attached to the back of the head, with visible symmetry of the wings, suggests the occurrence of metamorphosis and rebirth, which are key elements in the process of personal and spiritual development. The “punctum” of this mural can be found in the intense gaze of the woman’s profile, which, although static, captivates attention and leads the viewer into a state of reflection. This may symbolise an inner focus or a moment of clarity, contrasting with the dynamic and colourful transformation of the butterfly, suggesting a contrast between inner peace and external development.



Figure 11. Title unknown, graffiti author: RT. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.

In the three murals, the female profile is depicted as interacting with motifs of nature—birds and a butterfly—giving them dynamism and fluidity. In each work, movement seems to be captured in various manifestations, from the delicate motion of feathers through the fleeting dance of the butterfly to a moment of introspection. All three works use movement and colour to tell a story of transformation and growth, reflecting the cycle of life and the elusive lightness of being.

These three murals, depicting female profiles in interaction with elements of nature, embody a profound exploration of themes central to human experience: transformation, growth, and the cycle of life. They serve as an artistic testament to the fluidity and

dynamism of existence, capturing moments of introspection, metamorphosis, and the interconnectedness of humans with the natural world. Through their unique composition and colour scheme, each mural invites viewers to reflect on deep cultural and educational themes, from personal and spiritual development to the recognition of the fleeting nature of life and the beauty hidden in transformation. The integration of natural motifs with human profiles offers insightful commentary on our relationship with nature, echoing the cultural significance of these elements in various traditions and beliefs. By encouraging viewers to engage with these themes, murals elevate public space not only aesthetically but also intellectually, fostering a deeper understanding of our place in the natural order and the continuous cycle of life and renewal.

4.5. Graffiti of the Heart

The thematic exploration within the ruins of the Aliko Hotel reveals a profound resonance with the heart motif across various artworks, manifesting not merely as a symbol of love or emotion but as a central theme encapsulating diverse human experiences. This imagery, depicted in many styles and contexts, is a poignant reminder of the intrinsic human capacity for empathy, passion, and connection. Through these visual narratives, the artists invite viewers into a reflective dialogue about the core of human experience, where the heart emerges as a universal symbol transcending cultural and linguistic barriers. Each piece, imbued with its unique expression of the love motif, contributes to a collective mosaic that narrates tales of hope, resilience, and the indomitable spirit of humanity amidst the backdrop of the hotel's extensive ruins. This thematic focus underscores the emotive power of graffiti and murals as a medium for capturing and conveying the multifaceted dimensions of the human condition.

Heart, as a theme, manifests not only in the practice of painting walls but also primarily in the motifs that artists choose to convey their message. It is a creativity that goes beyond conventions, bold and uninhibited, and carries echoes of artistic freedom. Each graffiti (Figures 12–14) is a different chapter of a love story in which the artist RT explores the boundaries of expression using both figurative and abstract elements. These works, though diverse, are united by a deep context of creativity.

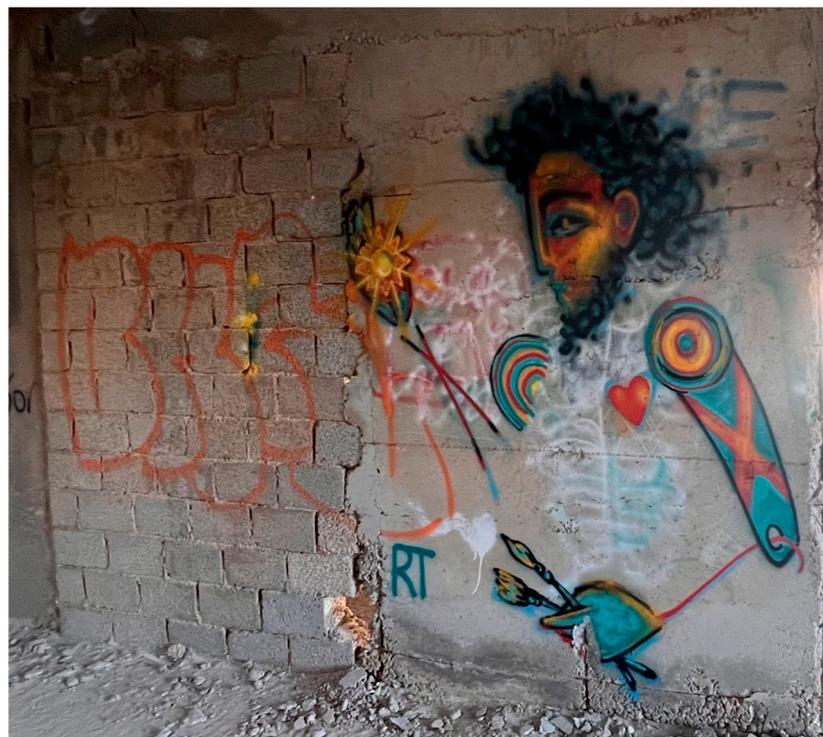


Figure 12. Title unknown, graffiti author: RT. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.



Figure 13. Title unknown, graffiti author: RT. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.



Figure 14. Title unknown, graffiti author: RT. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.

The graffiti depicted in Figure 12 shows a curly haired man. His face seems radiant, emphasised by warm colours. He holds in his hands paintbrushes, a symbol of a painter, and also a golden star, which could embody creative inspiration. The heart and eyes around

the figure may symbolise love, empathy, and the need to be seen or understood. The star in the figure's hand can be interpreted as a symbol of life and beauty amid destruction, possibly referring to hope and rebirth. The use of colour and abstract forms in graffiti is striking and eye-catching. The colour scheme of the graffiti, dominated by blue, red, and yellow, may suggest energetic and positive emotions. The style may also affect the viewer through its unconventional nature and spontaneity, which are characteristics of many street artworks. Although the portrait seems unfinished, the central point of the figure is the heart as a symbol of inner feelings and experiences. The depiction of the artist as a colourful, vibrant spirit may reflect the joy and energy that art brings to life. The ruins of the Aliko Hotel, where this graffiti is located, may add an additional layer of meaning (Lianos 2023a). It can be speculated that the artist chose this place to comment on the contrast between decay and rebirth and between oblivion and memory. The graffiti could have been created with the interaction with visitors in mind, provoking reflection or serving as an invitation to dialogue. A figure looking at the viewer may initiate virtual communication, expressing the idea of mutual understanding and community. The graffiti can be considered a "studium", reflecting various aspects of urban culture, using symbolism and aesthetics to convey messages of hope, creativity, and human expression.

The "punktum" of this graffiti may lie in details that initiate a strong, individual response. It could be the red heart of the figure, which draws attention and seems to be a window into the artist's soul, revealing the depth of his inner world. The heart evokes reflection that is both introspective and future-oriented and full of hope and dreams. The "punktum" might also be the figure holding a flower in a place that seems abandoned and devastated. The contrast between the delicacy and life-giving force of the flower and the harshness of the surroundings can attract attention and elicit a strong emotional response.

The abstract forms and lines around the figure, which may resemble organs or mechanical elements, can also constitute a "punktum" for the viewer, suggesting a connection between the human and mechanical, natural and man-made, which may provoke thoughts on the nature of human existence.

The theme of a red heart returns in another graffiti by the same author as a counter-balance to indifference and lack of empathy. Another character held his or her wounded heart in his or her hand (Figure 13). The "studium" of this mural may focus on its abstract and geometric representation. The outline of a man in a hat, created using simple shapes and vivid colours, may symbolise the deconstructed essence of the human form, emphasising an abstract approach to the human figure in art. The dynamic lines and contrasting colours indicate energy and movement, respectively, adding visual power to the image. The "punktum" of this mural may evoke a strong, personal response due to the depiction of a heart held in hand, symbolising openness, sensitivity, and perhaps even an emotional wound. This image may prompt viewers to reflect on their own feelings and experiences related to love and loss. In this case, the "punktum" could be a symbol of the search for lost sensitivity to the surrounding world.

The third graffiti (Figure 14) by the same artist, RT, depicts hands touching flowers, with fingers whose bodies are also woven from floral motifs. This work seemingly foregrounds the connection between humans and nature and the power of expression through the delicacy of gestures and the richness of colours.

Hands, often symbolising action, communication, and creation in art, may, in this mural context, suggest the human capacity for nurturing and harmonious coexistence with nature. Flowers used to create figures' bodies might signify that human identity is deeply rooted in the natural world, with which we continuously interact. The gesture of touching flowers can be interpreted as a search for beauty, mindfulness, or a moment of peace. It also visually represents the need for contact, tenderness, and connection. Bodies woven from flowers may reflect the human psyche, which is rich and complex, as nature itself and filled with diverse sensations and emotions. This work invites reflection on the human condition and our place in the natural world. It portrays humans as creative beings, both creators and part of this floral plan of life. The mural encourages appreciation of beauty and the

fleetingness of the moment, as well as understanding that our actions and interactions impact the world. It is an image full of optimism that can inspire behaviours promoting balance and sustainable development.

The three graffiti, united by the theme of creativity, each uniquely reflect different aspects of the creative process. The artist is captured at a moment of inspiration, through the heart symbolising passion and the emotional depth of the creator, to figures with flaming hair. All the works prominently feature hands, each holding a different symbol.

The “Creative Graffiti” category in the Aliko Hotel ruins presents a profound exploration of the interplay between human creativity and nature (Lianos 2023b). These works collectively depict a nuanced narrative of human interaction with the natural environment, emphasising the importance of creative expression in understanding and enhancing our relationship with nature. The recurring motifs of hands and flowers signify nurturing, care, and a deep-rooted connection to the natural world. Each graffiti piece serves as a cultural and educational artifact, illustrating how art can be a powerful tool for conveying complex themes such as ecological awareness, the fragility of life, and the beauty of human emotions.

Through artistic expression, these graffiti challenge viewers to contemplate their role in the natural world and the impact of their actions. They offer a compelling narrative that intertwines human emotions, creativity, and ecological consciousness, fostering a deeper understanding of our shared responsibility towards the environment. The vibrant colours, dynamic compositions, and symbolic imagery in these works contributed to a culturally enriching and educational experience, encouraging viewers to engage with the themes of sustainability, emotional awareness, and the transformative power of art in society.

4.6. Graffiti of Resistance

Over time, some graffiti representations have lost their clarity and contours, while others have been deliberately obscured. This is the case with graffiti by Andrea Nyffeler, depicting a faceless woman partially obliterated by someone else. The woman, with black skin colour, stands amidst masks imitating skulls and is frozen in expressions of pain and suffering (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Hope, graffiti author: Andrea Nyffeler. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.

Adjacent to this graffiti, there is also an image of a paper boat surrounded by a red sea (Figure 16). This graffiti seems to correspond with the content of the previous image and serves as its continuation, as evidenced by the use of the same red background.



Figure 16. Artist, graffiti author: Andrea Nyffeler. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.

In the Aliko ruins, an image of a blue cat appears with the inscription “Save the animals” (Figure 17). The free expression in the form of graffiti likely became a creative impulse for subsequent visitors to the ruins, who left visible marks on the walls in the form of personal comments to the drawing. The plea to save animals speaks to us as an appeal for ecological awareness and the need to act in defence of those who do not have their own voice in the human world.



Figure 17. Save the Animals, graffiti author: unknown. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.

These three images, differing in form and message, create a mosaic of stories about resistance, the struggle to maintain identity, loss, and hope. All these works of graffiti combine creative passion with political and social messages, becoming both monuments of individual expressions and collective symbols of broader social aspirations. It is a dialogue with time and the viewer that never ends; as long as there is a wall, there is the possibility of expressing resistance. Interpretation using the concepts of “studium” and “punctum” allows for a fuller understanding of the work.

The analysis of the graffiti presented in Figure 15 necessitates consideration of both its formal aspects and deeper layers of meaning expressed through a unique amalgamation of visual elements. The “study” revolves around human skulls, which, in a cultural sense,

have been associated with the motif of transience for centuries. Symbolically, the skull is an attribute of death that abolishes all social divisions and comes to people of every class and age (the motif of the *danse macabre*). The depiction of the woman is dominated by ambiguity—on the one hand, presence, and on the other hand, anonymity. The skulls surrounding her can be interpreted as the voices of those lost in the chaos of history or as a representation of the loss of identity. The “punctum” is an element that directly cuts to the individual experience of the viewer, eliciting a personal reaction. This could be because the woman’s face is painted yellow, evoking associations such as a sense of alienation and anonymity. This golden reflection draws attention and provokes contemplation about the meaning the artist might have intended to express. Is it an expression of inner light, the soul, or perhaps a lack of identity, further emphasised by the obscured face? The red background is unequivocally associated with blood and violence, potentially symbolising the cruelty of war and the desire to avenge one’s kin. This is suggested by the fact that the woman holds two skulls close to her. The absence of faces may suggest a loss of individuality in the face of unimaginable tragedies. The female figure, which appears to stand amidst the skull, could represent a community or collective memory that endures despite the loss of individual identities. This graffiti, composed of contrasting colours with a central figure, can be interpreted as a powerful commentary on history, memory, and human suffering. It presents a form of resistance, transporting the viewer beyond the aesthetic experience of art to a place of profound reflection on the human condition. The graffiti raises questions about the past and how it is remembered or forgotten, and the golden area where the face should be could be a key element inviting the viewer to further exploration and interpretation.

In the graffiti (Figure 16), the artist depicts a paper boat. Often, this symbolises childhood innocence and simplicity, but it can also represent a journey and transience. As an element of graffiti, it may unexpectedly contrast with the harshness of the urban environment, introducing elements of dreams or escaping from everyday life. The red background on which the boat is placed might evoke associations with danger, passion, life and death. In the context of the inscription “HOPE”, red may symbolise strong emotions related to hope, with determination to survive and overcome difficulties. The boat may symbolise the hope for a better future, a journey to a safer place, perhaps in a metaphorical sense. In a social context, graffiti with a boat may refer to current global events, such as the migration crisis, where boats have become a powerful symbol of human desperation and the search for asylum. In this interpretation, the image can be a commentary on these events, expressing solidarity with the suffering or a call for attention and action. The inscription “HOPE”, in close proximity to the boat, can act as a “punctum”—an element that draws emotional attention and provokes a personal reaction. For each viewer, this could be a different element: the inscription itself, the shape of the boat, or even the texture of the wall on which the graffiti is made. In the ruins of the Hotel Aliko, where the work is placed, this may have additional significance, connecting the past with the present and future and transforming an abandoned place into a space for reflection and aspiration.

Due to its nature, the cat also represents a symbol of freedom and independence. The blue colour of the cat in graffiti is usually unnatural for this species, suggesting uniqueness or a surreal aspect of the work. Since cats are often perceived as independent and wilful animals, depicting a cat in an unusual colour can be a metaphor for the uniqueness of all animal species and their right to live without threat from humans. The “study” in this graffiti (Figure 17) focuses on the figure of the cat, which culturally has ambivalent symbolism. In antiquity, cats were revered, and the Greeks and Romans believed they were the favourite animals of Diana, the goddess of the Moon. However, in the Middle Ages, they began to be treated with suspicion as enemies and constant companions of witches. In Greece, especially in Naxos, cats are treated with special care (Stampoulidis 2019). The inscription “Save the Animals” can act as a “punctum”, evoking a strong personal reaction, especially among those engaged in animal protection or holding strong ecological beliefs. The blue colour of the cat can also provoke emotional reactions, perhaps evoking feelings of sadness or concern for the fate of the animal. By combining art with a social message,

the creator of this work uses urban space as a platform for discussing issues important to the contemporary world.

According to the analysis of the graffiti of resistance, each piece reflects a strong social and ecological message on its own, bringing to the ruins of the Hotel Aliko not only an aesthetic dimension but also an educational and activist dimension (Śliwerski 2021). Graffiti not only reflects the personal and creative impulses of artists but also fits into a broader narrative of resistance—against forgetting, indifference, and injustice. Art in the ruins of the Hotel Aliko becomes a voice that continually reminds us of the importance of memory, compassion, and hope. Each graffiti is a unique call to contemplation and can serve as inspiration for individual and collective change.

4.7. Graffiti of Emotions

In the ruins of Hotel Aliko, dominant graffiti features the motif of human faces. We return to this theme again. Despite the simplicity of their graphic form, these masks effectively convey specific emotions such as fear, sadness, pain, admiration, pride, and indifference (Norman and Wheeler 2020). Some are frozen in expressions of terror, sadness, or pain (Gori et al. 2021). In many cultures, the face reflects the spirit of a person. It becomes a carrier of thoughts and emotions, as well as a source of knowledge about lived experiences. Some faces consist only of outlined contours of the eyes, nose, or mouth. Despite their minimalist graphic form, the masks nevertheless express concrete emotions ranging from admiration to pride or indifference. The ability to recognise and interpret emotions based on facial expression is a fundamental aspect of interpersonal communication and social interaction (Whalen et al. 1998), and interpreting these emotions is significant for social relations across different cultures and age groups.

Graffiti (Figure 18) depicts a portrait of a middle-aged man, representing an individual identity. The “study” in this graffiti is the face of the man, marked by evident suffering. It is unclear whether this is an imagined character or perhaps a self-portrait of the creator himself, experiencing existential dilemmas. The man appears pensive and possibly also weighed down by the burdens of life and daily concerns. The “punctum” becomes the raised eyebrows and eyes of the figure, expressing powerlessness, helplessness, and concern. The wrinkles visible on the face suggest that the subject of the painting has experienced much and has been seasoned by fate. This is also emphasised by the expression of seriousness. A self-portrait may symbolise a reflection on one’s own life and the changes occurring in it.

Graffiti in Figure 19 portrays a man’s bust with a minimalist flair. Accents of green cast a contrast that deepens the work’s interpretive ambiguity. Over time, modifications have appeared: one eye turned white, and buttons were painted on, hinting at a uniform, perhaps signifying the depicted man as a soldier or commander. His emotional detachment could be a response to witnessed tragedies. Below the graffiti, a reflective rectangular shape introduces a new aspect to the composition, suggestive of the subject’s symbolic heart or core, potentially engaging the viewer as a “punctum”. This reflective element invites introspection into the depicted character’s inner life, soul, or concealed identity, leaving an impression of an expansive void where the heart should be.

The next graffiti (Figure 20) analysed presents simple yet expressive contours of a face, marked by intense colours. A stark contrast between red and green can attract attention and evoke strong emotions. Such a representation, reduced to the most characteristic features of the face—the eye, nose, and mouth—may indicate directness of expression and simplicity of the message. The economy of form in graffiti allows for immediate communication and can be deliberately used to emphasise the strength of the visual message. Red colouration around the eye (contour and eyebrow) can be associated with intensity, passion, or aggression, while green lips may suggest growth, nature, or tranquillity. This contrast may be used to illustrate the internal emotional contradictions or the complexity of emotions the artist wishes to convey. The minimalist form, combined with strong colours, can stimulate viewers to reflect on their own emotions and mental states. In this graffiti, the “punctum”

could be a detail that attracts attention and prompts reflection—perhaps it is the way the eye is drawn, expressing a specific feeling, such as sadness or anger. Moreover, shade can be red or green, which may evoke various associations and memories in different individuals. The “punctum” might also be a unique feature of the graffiti that deviates from conventional representations and catches the eye, such as the unusual use of colour on the lips.



Figure 18. Title unknown, graffiti author: unknown. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.



Figure 19. Title unknown, graffiti author: unknown. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.



Figure 20. Title unknown, graffiti author: unknown. Author of the photo: Elzbieta Perzycka-Borowska.

The three graffiti discussed here express emotions through visual representations of faces that are both raw and expressive. Each communicates with the viewer in a different way, becoming a manifestation of human experience, where “study” pertains to the overall content and “punctum” refers to an element of the work that is individually felt. These are tests of how urban art (Mubi Brighenti 2010) can serve not only as a tool for individual artists’ expression but also as a medium for dialogue with the audience, inviting interaction and eliciting emotional responses (Norman and Wheeler 2020).

4.8. Pop Culture Graffiti

In the ruins of the Aliko Hotel, the graffiti emerges as a striking collage, fusing popular culture, mythical tales, and the stark realities of current conflicts. The visual narratives encapsulate a spectrum from iconic figures of films, comics, and TV series to heroes and villains, blending fantasy with the palpable. For example, a piece by graffiti artist WD taps into Spielberg’s cinematic universe with a creature akin to a gremlin (Figure 21), representing the anarchic side of humanity—a veiled allusion to chaos.

The adjacent mural presents a superhero in orange amour (Figure 22), embodying comic book heroism and enigma. The anonymity of this character echoes the unidentified champions of real-world crises, their concealed faces representing the unsung and unseen in global conflicts.

In this context, references to Tolkien’s narratives resonate, embodying the perpetual struggle between good and evil, akin to the enduring combat in many places around the world. Such juxtapositions in the Aliko Hotel’s graffiti create a space for dialogue, where the distinction between fiction and reality fades, prompting reflections on the cyclical nature of history and the human spirit’s resilience in the face of hardship.



Figure 21. Title unknown, graffiti author: unknown. Author of the photo: Agnieszka Szajner.



Figure 22. Title unknown, graffiti author: unknown. Author of the photo: Agnieszka Szajner.

The interconnected murals do not merely reflect the artists' engagement with popular and mythical narratives but also weave a commentary on contemporary socio-political events (Waldner and Dobratz 2013). They serve as spaces for examining the intertwined narratives of cultural identity, mythic echoes, and commentary on current events like wars (Perzycka-Borowska et al. 2023).

Each mural, with its particular blend of whimsy and mystery, is a testament to the artist's interaction with broader cultural currents and offers a layered interpretation. This multiplicity allows for an intricate analysis through the dual lenses of "stadium" and "punctum", facilitating an understanding that captures both the shared cultural impact and the profound personal resonance of these works.

The "punctum" of the graffiti (Figure 21) becomes the pointed ears, flared nostrils, and yellow eyes of the character. The fantastical creature emerges from a dark lair, and its gaze suggests hostile intentions. Sharp fangs are also visible, which may symbolise a propensity for aggression. The character's image has been partially obscured, so it is unclear whether the creature holds any tools. The clenched mouth and eyes fixed on a single point give the

impression that it is about to attack. The Russian invasion of Ukraine gives the graffiti a new meaning (Perzycka-Borowska et al. 2023; Leahy 2024). The term “orcs” has become attached to Russian soldiers, emphasising their brutality and mindless obedience to orders. The graffiti in Aliko becomes a symbol of the darkness that lurks in human nature and the primal hunter’s instinct to seek expansion and domination, causing harm to others.

In contrast, within the ruins of the hotel, an image of a superhero emerges in an orange mask (Figure 22), associated with positive values such as loyalty, justice, and bravery. In popular culture, many masked heroes intentionally conceal their identities to serve the community anonymously. They do this not for their own glory and fame but for the greater good. Masks become attributes of heroes who guard order and administer justice outside the institutional dimension. Both classic literary heroes (Zorro) and characters associated with the world of comics (Batman, Spider-Man) wear them. The “study” of the graffiti (Figure 22) evokes associations with a fictional character from the series “*The Mandalorian*”, set in the “*Star Wars*” universe. This mysterious bounty hunter wears distinctive armour, and his face remains hidden under a helmet throughout. The Mandalorian must live according to a moral code imposed by his community (McAuliffe 2012). As a masked hero, he remains hidden and distant from those he encounters along his way, focused on completing his tasks. The situation changes when, during a mission, he encounters a green creature named Groggu, a childlike counterpart of Master Yoda. From that point, the Mandalorian becomes his guardian. The “punctum” is the mask covering the character’s face, which may symbolise a hidden identity. The orange colour could signify a luminous glow and the hero’s special power. In the era of liquid modernity (Bauman 2000; Giddens 1991), we wear various masks and deal with a collage of images, playing different social roles (Wang et al. 2020). Identity has become an open project (Giddens 1991) and is also constructed based on symbolic media material available on television and in the online environment. Media heroes, including fictional characters, have become an important reference point in the context of personal role models.

The vivid depiction of the boat transformed into a predatory shark (Figure 23), this artistic technique showcases the subculture of street art’s penchant for reimagining and repurposing common objects. By metamorphosing the mundane into the extraordinary, the artist not only redefines the object itself but also the space it occupies. This transformation speaks to the essence of street art within mural traditions, where artists reinterpret their surroundings through a creative lens, challenging viewers’ perceptions and inviting them to see the familiar in a new light. The artistic rendition of the boat with sharp, menacing teeth, reminiscent of a predatory fish, evokes not only contemporary cinematic (the cult film *Jaws*, (<https://www.filmweb.pl/film/Szcz%C4%99ki-1975-1217>, accessed on 10 February 2024) directed by Steven Spielberg, 1975) imagery but also harkens back to ancient maritime traditions. Specifically, the ancient Greek practice of anthropomorphising boats by painting eyes on their prows offers an interesting parallel. This tradition, aimed at endowing vessels with a semblance of life and protection, mirrors the modern artist’s creative endeavour to imbue an inanimate object with dynamic and animate qualities. The juxtaposition of this historical reference with the contemporary reinterpretation serves to enrich the interpretive layers of the artwork, suggesting a continuity and evolution of human attempts to blend the realms of the animate and inanimate, the mythical and the everyday. This intertextual play not only deepens our understanding of the graffiti’s thematic nuances but also underscores the artist’s engagement with a rich body of cultural symbols and practices, spanning from ancient lore to modern pop culture.



Figure 23. Title unknown, graffiti author: unknown. Author of the photo: Agnieszka Szajner.

The “stadium” of this graffiti, or its overarching theme, emerges as a playful yet sharp commentary on the potential of art to transform and animate our reality, akin to the natural world’s own processes of metamorphosis (Ottalagano 2022). Meanwhile, the “punctum”—the detail that pierces the observer, creating a personal connection—might be pinpointed to the startling depiction of the shark’s teeth. This stark and unexpected feature in a place marked by abandonment and decay captures the viewer’s attention and elicits a range of responses, from amusement at the clever adaptation of form to reflections on nature’s inherent duality of beauty and danger. Furthermore, this piece can be viewed as a reflection on its environment, portraying the graffiti-covered ruins as a dormant yet vibrant urban ‘ocean’ where art, like a dominant predator, brings vitality to spaces left behind by society. It serves as a poignant reminder of art’s enduring presence and its power to infuse even the most desolate spaces with life and meaning.

The presence of pop culture figures not only bestows the ruins with artistic and narrative depth but also fosters a dynamic interaction (Gralińska-Toborek 2019) between the artwork and its viewers, prompting personal reflection and questioning in an era marked by crises of authority and values. In our current societal landscape, do we yearn for new heroes to navigate the complexities of the 21st century?

5. Reimagining Spaces—Summary

By analysing the murals and graffiti found in the ruins of the Hotel Aliko, it is essential to emphasise their multifaceted cultural–educational potential. These visual artefacts of culture not only adorn space but also become catalysts for critical reflection and narrative analogy (Rolston 2018). Through the lens of street art, which combines aesthetic vividness with profound meaning, discourse on identity (Perzycka-Borowska et al. 2023; Leahy 2024), history (Kazanowski 2018), ecology (Impelluso 2006), and social diversity (Lachowska and Pielużek 2021) becomes feasible.

The study of murals and graffiti indicates their ability to function as open galleries, democratising access to art and education. The diverse themes and techniques employed by artists foster the shaping of cultural and aesthetic awareness (Gralińska-Toborek 2019). These works, set in the context of ruins, also carry messages of transience, history, and transformation, encouraging observers to ask questions about the past, present, and future of the place.

From an educational perspective (Śliwerski 2021), murals and graffiti can serve as tools to support the development of critical thinking and visual analysis. They convey significant social and ecological content, engaging the community in dialogue on current and relevant topics such as climate change, human rights, or the significance of cultural heritage.

Street art on the ruins of the Hotel Aliko can also play a crucial role in attracting tourists and educating local communities. Murals and graffiti, as part of this space, can be a starting point for conversations about values, beliefs, and issues that are common in society. Moreover, unlike traditional cultural institutions, street art is freely accessible and potentially attracts diverse social groups.

Finally, it is noteworthy that murals and graffiti in the ruins of Aliko can contribute to revitalising the area, giving it new meaning and value. This art demonstrates how abandoned places can be transformed into spaces full of life and art and has educational potential by showing how art can influence the social perception of places and public spaces, contributing to the revitalisation and transformation of abandoned areas.

Murals and graffiti in the ruins of the Hotel Aliko possess significant socioeducational potential (Olteanu and Campbell 2018) and can be utilised to enrich cultural experiences and social education and as tools for the regeneration and revitalisation of abandoned spaces.

In light of the impending demolition of the Hotel Aliko ruins, as discussed in the theoretical section of our manuscript, this analysis acquires an added layer of urgency and poignancy. The transient existence of these murals and graffiti underscores a significant aspect of street art—its ephemerality and role as a temporary custodian of cultural and social narratives. The impending loss of the Hotel Aliko ruins not only marks the end of physical space but also signifies the erasure of a unique canvas that has captured myriad artistic expressions and sociocultural dialogues in education. This impending demolition serves as a critical reminder of the fragility of cultural heritage in the face of urban development and change (Mubi Brighenti 2010). It challenges us to reflect on the ways in which we preserve, document, and remember such ephemeral art forms, their embedded stories, and their impact on community identity and cultural education. Thus, the fate of the Hotel Aliko ruins stands as a testament to the often-fleeting nature (Impelluso 2006) of street art and the necessity for more deliberate efforts in preserving and valuing these temporary yet significant cultural landmarks (Ondřej et al. 2023).

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Appendix A

Table A1. List of photos of murals and graffiti made in the ruins of the Aliko Hotel in Naxos.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	WD	"The Third eye", 2018	The picture shows a mural depicting a colourful, fantastical figure with a large, distinctive head and one visible eye. The figure has a bald head and intense, dramatic facial features, which give it a striking and somewhat surreal character. The colour scheme of the mural is vibrant, with deep shades of purple, red, and various shades of orange that outline the figure and emphasise its three-dimensional form. The figure seems to be intensely looking at the viewer, which can evoke a feeling of interaction or observation. The background of the mural, the dusk sky, and the raw, concrete surroundings create a contrasting backdrop for the colourful image, while at the same time integrating the artwork with its environment. The mural refers to Greek mythology—the motif of the Cyclops. At the same time, the third eye in Hinduism is a symbol of enlightenment and extrasensory perception. The 3D effect emphasises transcending the boundaries of knowledge and entering higher states of consciousness.
	WD	"Sea Breeze", 2018	The photo shows a mural painted on the outer wall of a concrete structure. The mural depicts a colourful image of a woman in profile, with her head turned towards the sky. Her face is detailed with clear features and vibrant colours, including shades of purple, yellow, and orange. Above the woman's head is a decorative motif that may resemble flames or plant patterns, executed in warm colours, creating an aura or crown around her head. On the right side of the mural, there are also abstract blue shapes that could symbolise water or air, adding an element of nature and movement to the composition. The female figure is entwined with tentacles. This suggests the mythical Medusa, but it could also be a goddess emerging from the sea waves, as suggested by the name 'sea breeze'.
	Lud Artwork	"Greek Gods"	The photo shows a mural depicting two male profiles facing in opposite directions, executed in dominant blue and black colours. The style resembles dynamics and movement, which may be accentuated by clear, almost abstract lines and patterns that create the background and fill the space around the figures. The faces are expressive, with strongly marked features and distinctive contours, giving the mural a strong emotional character. The background patterns may resemble elements of wind or water, which, combined with the cool colour scheme, creates a sense of movement and change. The mural might suggest a contrast between two states of being, different perspectives, or reflect the internal dynamics of thoughts and emotions. The choice of location is not coincidental, as the island of Naxos is the mythical birthplace of the Olympian God

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	WD	"Madness", 2018	<p>The photo shows a mural depicting a close-up of a man's face. The mural is made with a great amount of detail. The clear facial features, such as eyes, nose, and mouth, are visible. The colour scheme of the artwork is rich, combining warm shades of brown, orange, and yellow, which give the character expressiveness and depth. A distinctive feature of this mural is the texture resembling fingerprints or small spirals, creating a complex pattern over the entire surface of the image. These details give the entire work a unique character and may suggest the idea of identity, individuality, or the complex nature of human existence. The mural is not only visually striking but can also be interpreted as a deep artistic statement, representing an allegory of madness, as expressed by the man's erroneous gaze. Additionally, it creates an effect of optical illusion.</p>
	WD	"Elf", 2018	<p>The photo shows a mural on the concrete wall of a building, placed in a natural setting. The mural depicts a colourful portrait of a smiling young elf with a playful gaze. The girl's face is full of life, with rosy cheeks and a cheerful expression in her eyes, giving the mural a warm and positive character. The figure refers to Norse beliefs, in which elves were beautiful beings endowed with power. Some of them harmed humans (dark elves), while others helped. The artwork is positioned in such a way that it forms the central point of view through an opening in the wall, adding depth to it and making it clearly visible in the landscape. The background of the wall is a view of the sea and sky, which highlights the contrast between the artificial structure and the natural environment. The overall composition harmonises with the surroundings while attracting attention with its intense colour scheme and touching representation of youth.</p>
	WD	"Beaching", 2018	<p>The photo shows a mural on an external wall, depicting two bird heads looking in opposite directions. The birds are painted in a realistic style, with rich details and vivid colours, giving them a sense of dynamism and vitality. Their feathers display various shades of green, blue, and brown, and their eyes seem expressive and full of life. The mural uses the perspective of the wall to create the illusion that the birds are part of a larger scene that extends beyond the boundaries of the image. The title 'Beaching' suggests relaxation and a stopover on a long journey. The mural in the photo showcases a nature motif in the form of migrating.</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	WD	"No place like home", 2015	<p>The photo shows a mural inside a concrete structure. The mural consists of several realistic paintings depicting animal figures that seem to blend into the concrete walls and pillars of the structure. On the left side, the mural features the face of a gorilla, which appears to emerge from dense shadows or is partially masked by patterns resembling fingerprints. Deeper in the room, on another wall, the face of a bear is visible, adding a wild and mysterious element to the overall composition. All figures are rendered in a monochromatic colour palette, which, combined with natural light entering through openings in the walls, creates a play of light and shadow, adding depth and atmosphere to the entire scene. This mural can be interpreted as an artistic statement about the presence of animals in abandoned or forgotten spaces. The mural has been partially destroyed, but in its original version, one of the figures is holding a club.</p>
	WD	"Expectancy", 2018	<p>The photo shows a mural painted on a concrete wall in a space resembling an unfinished or abandoned building. The mural depicts a realistic profile of a woman's face looking to the right. The artwork is detailed, with clear facial features and smooth colour gradients. The woman's face is surrounded by abstract patterns that seem to spread from her head and intertwine with the surrounding architecture, creating the impression that these patterns are an extension of the character's thoughts or emotions. These patterns are made in dark shades, creating a striking contrast with the lighter parts of the face. The mural has a modern and dynamic character, thanks to the use of various painting techniques and the effect of expanding forms. The entrance door is located in the head's position, creating the illusion that we can see inside the character's thoughts.</p>
	Skitsorefrenis	No title painted 2019	<p>Na zdjęciu widoczne jest graffiti, które przedstawia profil kobiety z uderzającymi, kolorowymi piórami w miejscu, gdzie zwykle znajdują się włosy. Pióra mają różnorodne barwy, takie jak róż, niebieski, żółty i czerwony, i sprawiają wrażenie, jakby były rozłożone jak w pawim ogonie lub były częścią maski karnawałowej. Twarz kobiety jest wykonana w subtelnym odcieniach szarości i białego, co tworzy wyraźny kontrast z żywymi barwami piór. Wyraz twarzy kobiety jest spokojny i zamyślony, a jej spojrzenie skierowane jest ku górze. Obok głowy kobiety unoszą się luźno abstrakcyjne kształty, które mogą przypominać płatki lub dodatkowe pióra, co dodaje całej kompozycji lekkości i eteryczności. Całość dzieła ma artystyczny i poetycki charakter. Ptak we włosach jest symbolem wolności, ekspresji i kreacji (kolorowe skrzydła)¹</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	Skitsofrenis	"Bang, bang I thought you down", 2019	<p>The photo shows graffiti depicting the profile of a woman with striking, colourful feathers in place of where hair usually is. The feathers have various colours, such as pink, blue, yellow, and red, and they give the impression of being spread out like a peacock's tail or being part of a carnival mask. The woman's face is executed in subtle shades of grey and white, creating a clear contrast with the vibrant colours of the feathers. The woman's expression is calm and thoughtful, with her gaze directed upwards. Floating loosely next to the woman's head are abstract shapes that could resemble petals or additional feathers, adding lightness and ethereality to the entire composition. The whole work has an artistic and poetic character. The bird in her hair symbolises freedom, expression, and creation (colourful wings).</p>
	Skitsofrenis	"Killing time with spray paint"	<p>The photo features the face of a woman with butterfly wings. The butterfly symbolises transience, the fragility of life, and beauty but also transformation. The woman has a calm, thoughtful expression, and her contour is clear and elegant. On the right side of the wall, there are also other tags and graffiti that appear to be less complex and may come from different artists. The dominant colours are blue and red, which integrate the mural with its surroundings, adding visual interest and an accent. The wall is in a brightly coloured environment, probably in a coastal area or open countryside, which allows the mural to stand out in this space</p>
	Anonymous	No title	<p>The photo shows graffiti on a brick wall. The graffiti depicts a figure with lush, flowing red hair that surrounds her face, creating a kind of halo. The figure has closed eyes and hands folded near the heart, and her gesture may suggest meditation, prayer, or deep concentration. Above the figure's head is a mask or totem with distinctive eyes and ornaments, giving the composition a mystical or ritualistic character. On the wall next to the figure, there are two messages. On the left side, the inscription reads: 'Seal the urban at its mouth. Take the water prisoner.', which can be interpreted as a call to control natural resources or to protect the environment. On the right side, the inscription states: 'Fill the sky with screams & cries. Bathe in fiery answers.', which may refer to emotional expression, rebellion, the search for truth, or the need for change. The entire graffiti, along with the texts, may have a deep symbolic meaning, encouraging reflection on human actions towards nature and society. The style of the work is colourful and expressive, with a strong emphasis on words and their potential consequences.</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	RT	No title	<p>The photo shows graffiti depicting a colourful figure of a man with distinctive, ethereal features. The man has curly hair and a beard, and his face is turned towards a flower (star) that he is holding in his hand. Around the figure, there are abstract, colourful patterns, including a heart on the chest and spirals on the arms, which give the entire image a surrealistic mood. On the left side of the graffiti, there is another inscription, likely a tag from a different artist, which contrasts with the more polished and colourful work. Colourful streams directed towards the figure's hand may symbolise energy, life, or creativity. The figure seems to breathe nature and harmony, suggesting a positive message of this piece of street art</p>
	RT	No title	<p>The photo shows a section of colourful graffiti, depicting the profile of the head and upper body of a figure with refined, organic forms around it. The figure has a thoughtful, serene facial expression and seems to be in a state of reflection or meditation. The figure's hair is represented as flowing lines in shades of red and blue, adding dynamics and a sense of movement. Around the figure, there are abstract shapes and patterns resembling flowers, circles, and other botanical motifs, executed in a warm colour palette, predominantly red, blue, and yellow. These decorative elements appear to radiate from the central figure, which might suggest the emanation of energy or an aura.</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	RT	No title	<p>The photo shows colourful graffiti on a brick wall. It depicts two figures in profile, facing each other, in a position suggesting interaction or dancing together. Each figure has elongated, decorated facial lines, with clearly defined eyes, noses, and mouths. The work is characterised by a dynamic colour palette, with dominating shades of blue, red, and turquoise, and patterned ornaments surrounding the figures, which may suggest movement or energy emanating from the dancers. The graffiti is executed in a style that combines elements of surrealism with ethereal motifs, possibly reminiscent of botanical or organic patterns. The whole is full of life and movement, and the colourful execution makes the work stand out against the brick wall background</p>
	Anonymous	No title	<p>The photo shows graffiti depicting an eye. The work is mainly in shades of grey and black on a concrete background, giving it a monochromatic and stark character. The eye mimics a planet with a ring—Saturn (a reference to the cosmic universe, where the microcosm reflects the macrocosm). In ancient Egypt, the Eye of Horus was a symbol of rebirth and a protective sign. The eyes of Horus were the sun and the moon.</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	Lia Koutelieri	No title	<p>The photo features a detailed graffiti painting of an eye on a concrete wall. The eye has realistically rendered details such as an iris in shades of blue and yellow, shiny reflections that add depth, and distinct lashes radiating outwards. This graffiti is particularly impressive due to its realistic details and three-dimensional effect.</p> <p>Below the eye, there is a rectangular opening in the wall, adding a certain level of abstraction to the composition and possibly suggesting that the eye is 'peeking' into the wall's interior. Next to the eye, there is also a small, round sticker or painting with an illegible tag, which might be the artist's signature. The entire piece demonstrates a high level of skill and is an example of how street art can attract attention and evoke emotional responses.</p>
	Anonymous	No title	<p>The photo shows graffiti on a concrete wall, depicting the silhouette of a human with a body resembling that of a horse, giving the figure a centaur-like appearance. The figure is holding a stick or staff, and its posture seems to express movement or dance. The figure also features a symbol with a crossed-out circle, which could be the artist's mark or a symbol representing a certain message or ideology. The background of the graffiti includes additional tags and symbols applied by other creators, which is typical for places popular among street artists. The style of the artwork is simplified, with a strong outline that clearly separates the figure from the background. The whole creates a contrast between the ancient myth of centaurs and contemporary graffiti culture.</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	Andrea Nyffeler	Hope	<p>The photo shows graffiti depicting a white, origami sailboat against a red-and-black mural. The boat is the central element of the piece, with clear lines and edges that make it appear three-dimensional. Next to the boat, a small label with the word 'HOPE' is placed, which may suggest the symbolic meaning of the image. The background is irregular and seems to be made of smeared and dripping paints in dark shades, which might evoke the idea of seawater or a stormy sky, adding depth and emotional context to the entire composition.</p>
	Andrea Nyffeler	No title	<p>The photo features a dark-skinned woman without a face, standing amidst masks symbolising death. She appears to be wearing something like a white shirt, with her arms hanging down along her body. The graffiti addresses the issue of fighting inequalities. Originally, the woman's face was not blurred, showing that subsequent individuals entered a dialogue with the message, giving it new meaning. The background of the work is dominated by dark, red, and black colours, adding a dramatic tone to the composition. The whole can evoke a sense of unease and may be an attempt to express difficult themes such as suffering, the human condition, or social criticism. The wall on which the image is located appears to be in poor condition, which may reinforce the artistic message of transience and oblivion.</p>
	Anonymous	Horses in gallop	<p>The photo shows a mural depicting two horses in motion, painted on a wall. The horses are represented in dynamic poses, suggesting running or galloping. The work is primarily in shades of blue on a white background, giving it a cool and tranquil character. In the lower part of the mural, there is a decorative band with motifs resembling waves or clouds, which may suggest a meadow or water surface over which the horses are running. The style of the painting is relatively realistic, with attention to the anatomical details of the animals. The graffiti is well integrated with its surroundings, and its horizontal format fits the long shape of the wall. It seems to be designed to decorate urban space, bringing an element of nature into the urban environment.</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	Anonymous	Save the Animals	<p>The photo features colourful graffiti on a concrete wall background. The graffiti depicts an unusual figure that seems to be a hybrid between a cat and an owl, with large, expressive eyes and fluffy fur. The figure is holding a fish, which may suggest a fishing scene or a symbolic connection with nature. The graffiti is executed in shades of blue and white, with accents of black, giving it a dreamy and ethereal character.</p> <p>Around the main figure, there are various inscriptions, including 'SAVE THE ANIMALS', as well as other, less legible tags and symbols, such as a heart, which may indicate an ecological or pro-animal message. Works of this type often aim to raise social awareness or simply adorn urban spaces. The background wall is covered with other graffiti and tags, indicating that this place is popular among street artists</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	Anonymous	No title	The photo features a man's face with an expression of surprise or astonishment. The man has bulging eyes and raised eyebrows, which may suggest emotions of surprise or amazement. The graffiti is painted in light shades, with dominating whites and beiges, and delicate contours. In the background, a somewhat neglected wall is visible, with cracks and traces of peeling paint, which gives the whole an urban character. Next to the graffiti, there are other smaller paintings and tags.

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	Anonymous	No title	<p>The photo features a figure of a man with the outline of his head and neck. It is created in a monochromatic colour palette, mainly in shades of grey, with visible traces of green paint at the bottom of the work. The face is characterised by harsh lines, with clearly defined facial features, giving an impression of three-dimensionality. The graffiti lacks an eye (it is painted over), which gives the composition a mysterious and somewhat unsettling mood. In the lower part, there is a rectangular area that reflects light, creating the impression of a mirror or window. The wall appears to be in poor condition, which emphasises the somewhat abandoned character of the place where the graffiti is located.</p>
	Anonymous	No title	<p>The photo shows a section of a brick wall on which graffiti in the form of a simplified human face has been created. The graffiti consists of several colourful elements: one eye is outlined in red with a black contour, the other eye is less distinct, and the mouth is highlighted with bright green paint. The lines are simple and somewhat asymmetrical, giving the face an abstract and sketchy expression. The background is neutral and grey, which makes the colourful elements of the graffiti stand out, giving the work a distinctive accent. The appearance of the face is exaggerated, which may suggest a certain kind of artistic expression or commentary. The whole gives the impression of an informal, spontaneous piece of street art.</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	Anonymous	No title	<p>The photo shows a piece of wall or stone on which graffiti has been painted. It depicts a caricature of a character in a sombrero who appears to be playing a guitar, sitting on an unseen bench or similar object. The figure has exaggerated features, such as long, thin limbs and an elongated torso, giving it a humorous and overstated character. The background of the graffiti is in shades of red and brown, which may suggest a sunset or a desert environment. Above the figure is the text 'BOOHAWHA!', which can be interpreted as a laugh or exclamation, adding a comedic element to the scene. In the lower right corner, there is a signature 'NAXOS', which may indicate the artist or location of the graffiti. The overall style resembles comic drawings or illustrations from humorous books</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	Anonymous	No title	<p>The photo shows graffiti on a concrete wall. The graffiti depicts a figure with a large, round head that might resemble a helmet or mask. The figure has an outlined body with elongated, slender arms. Above the figure's head is a symbol or inscription that looks like 'Ex' with additional graphic elements, suggesting a possible meaning or context associated with this work. Below the figure, there is another inscription, which might be the artist's signature or a comment. The colour scheme of the graffiti is mainly black and yellow, creating a strong contrast against the grey wall. The style of the painting is simple, with clear lines and a dynamic posture of the figure.</p>
	Anonymous	No title	<p>The photo shows graffiti depicting a figure resembling a goblin or another fantastical, mythological creature. The image is created in a monochromatic colour palette, mainly in shades of grey. The figure has distinctive, large eyes, pointed ears, and a twisted nose, giving it a grotesque, perhaps even slightly terrifying appearance. The creature is holding something resembling a pipe or club, and its pose suggests dynamic movement or hiding. The graffiti is placed in a niche or opening in the wall, which adds depth to the composition and makes the figure appear to be emerging from the shadows. Details such as the folds of the skin or the texture of the clothing are carefully executed, demonstrating the artist's high skill. The overall piece has a surrealistic character and can evoke various interpretations depending on the viewer.</p>

Table A1. Cont.

Photo of a Mural or Graffiti	Author	Title	Characteristic
	Anonymous	No title	<p>The graffiti is varied in style and colour, with some pieces displaying more artistic flair, using gradients and shading to create a sense of depth. Other tags are simpler, featuring names or initials in a typical tagging style.</p> <p>The lighting plays a significant role in the mood of this scene, creating a play of shadows that could be seen to symbolise the interplay between light and dark, perhaps metaphorically representing hope in neglect or beauty in decay. The overall atmosphere of the image is one of forgotten urbanity, a space where the usual bustle of city life has been replaced by a quieter, more reflective presence.</p>

Note

¹ The photograph captures a piece of graffiti that depicts a woman's profile, her head adorned with striking, colorful feathers in place of where one would typically find hair. These feathers boast a spectrum of hues such as pink, blue, yellow, and red, creating an impression as if they were splayed out like a peacock's tail or part of a carnival mask. The woman's face is rendered in subtle shades of gray and white, establishing a vivid contrast with the vibrant colors of the feathers. Her expression is serene and contemplative, with her gaze directed upwards. Floating near the woman's head are loose, abstract shapes that might resemble petals or additional feathers, lending an overall lightness and ethereal quality to the composition. The entire piece exudes an artistic and poetic essence. The bird in her hair symbolizes freedom, expression, and creation (colorful wings).

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