GRAFFITI ART IN PRISON

Edited by

Gabriella Cianciolo Cosentino, Christine Kleiter, Federica Testa, Ascensión Hernández Martínez, Laura Barreca

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Preface

Graffiti, drawings and writings constitute explicit narratives that transform the surfaces of walls from impassive containers to 'heterotopic spaces'. In prison, an environment designed to control body and mind, the wall isolates, separates and oppresses. However, through graffiti, it can become the exact opposite: a tool of communication, an element that connects over space and time. In his radio dissertations on heterotopic space, presented on *France Culture* in December 1966, the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) considered the prison as an 'other-space' or 'counterspace': a place of resistance where imagination finds a home. This definition inspired the project GAP – Graffiti Art in Prison to consider various places of confinement and the artistic responses to these environments. The point of departure was to relate one of the most important cultural sites in Sicily, the Inquisition prisons in the Palermitan Palazzo Chiaramonte and their extraordinary palimpsest of historical graffiti, with artistic expressions in contemporary prisons. Thus, the main purpose was to confront this unique 'document-monument' with other examples of prison graffiti in a diachronic perspective, without geographic or semantic limitations in defining the concept of wall and graffiti techniques.

The GAP project is the result of collaboration between universities, research institutions, and prison environments, experimenting a new educational model based on an interdisciplinary and horizontal approach. The project foresaw the participation of artists, scholars, experts, historians and architects who were engaged to reflect on prison condition and its social context. The actors were all equally called to collaborate in rethinking educational institutions as places for the construction of a collective conscience. Protagonists of this educational process was a group of international doctoral students with different backgrounds in the humanities, who proposed research projects in various disciplines. During the three-year program were organized six study weeks, that took place in the partnership countries, Italy, Spain and Germany. The goal was to approach methodological issues related to graffiti: the relationship between freedom and censorship, the blurry line that separates art and vandalism, as well as the theory and practice of graffiti in different times and places, including its role as political protest and critique of the system. Special attention was given to heritage and its preservation, mainly related to prisons as difficult heritage. These study weeks were

not exclusively characterized by lectures or visits to relevant sites, but also allowed doctoral students to participate in workshops in Italian prisons (Ucciardone, Malaspina, Pagliarelli in Palermo and Sollicciano in Florence). Several artists were involved in this project who used their creativity and skills to find common ground and create collaborations among students, inmates and prison staff. The main objective has been the fostering of concrete creative actions, making an example of how art and knowledge can be used as mediators for different social contexts.

This volume collects the scientific contributions of doctoral students, professors and affiliated researchers who participated in the project. The articles are the result of researches developed over the three-year period following the macro thematic areas emerged from a constant and participative confrontation. To illustrate the project in its entirety, the final section of the book is dedicated to the artistic workshops in the form of written and photographic documentation, in order to emphasize their high educational and cultural value.

Introduction

Prison Graffiti: A Genre?

Gabriella Cianciolo Cosentino

Astronomers look only at old light.
There is no other light for them to look at.
This old light of dead or distant stars was emitted long ago and it reaches us in the present.[1]

Stars and Graffiti

What are prison graffiti? How can we define this specific form of expression and can we consider it a distinct category within the immense field of graffiti? As an introduction to the volume and as a conclusion to the GAP Project, it is appropriate to question the very concept of prison graffiti: as a type of graffiti in general and, perhaps, as a 'genre'. For this purpose, I borrow the powerful image proposed by George Kubler in his famous book *The Shape of Time*, in which the art historian compares art and stars, the historian and the astronomer, both engaged in the 'portrayal of time' and 'concerned with appearances noted in the present but occurring in the past'.[2] Like the lights of ancient and possibly vanished stars, graffiti are signals, transmissions from the past, impulses that undergo various transformations, deformations and disturbances before they reach us. Like the vibrations of a wave, they fade as they propagate, but they do not disappear entirely and we are the present recipients of these composite and complex signals. Although distorted and 'imperfect', often impossible to decipher and interpret, these signals are evidence of past existence and contain messages from galaxies distant in time and space.

Why do prison graffiti matter? Beyond the information they contain and their value as a historical source, all graffiti contain something we can describe as energy, in the sense of drive and motivation. This energy is particularly strong in prison graffiti given the conditions under which they are produced: they carry a meaning that goes beyond the illustrative, beyond the narrative. The energy of the initial signals or original messages does not disappear and we perceive it as a 'resonance' in the present. In astronomy, the orbital resonance is the gravitational influence of the celestial bodies on one another. In art history, the concept of

[1] KUBLER 1962, p. 19.
[2] Ibid.

resonance has been theorized by Stephen Greenblatt in relation to the theatricality and agency of objects, relics, cultural artifacts, and works of art.[3] According to him, even when an object's charisma is largely exhausted, it can still radiate cultural energy, revealing the (historically contingent) social processes and practices through which objects were produced: negotiations, exchanges, relationships, conflicts. By resonance, he means the power of an object to reach beyond its formal boundaries and evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic forces from which it emerged. As an example of 'rich source of resonance'[4] he mentions the precariousness of the objects, materialized in the signs of use and marks of the human touch on the artifacts themselves, including attempts of scratching, defacing, and smashing.

Graffiti, resonance bearer par excellence, come to us as similar testimonies to the forces that produced them – whether creative or destructive – and release an energy that is the projection of those forces, even after decades or centuries. We, as recipients, can grasp, recover and transmit a part of this universe of traces, but we also inevitably contribute to their deformation through our contemporary interpretation. It is a parallel process to that of artists who intervene on pre-existing graffiti by modifying, covering, and hiding them; a process which simultaneously both preserves the older ones and obscures them in layers of palimpsest.

Prison Graffiti

Although it is a global and widespread phenomenon, there are no comprehensive studies that deal specifically with the issue of graffiti in detention spaces. There have been investigations on prison art in general,[5] as well as insights into individual case studies, both historical and contemporary[6] – including graffiti from the Inquisition prisons in Palermo and Malta[7] – but an interdisciplinary discourse on prison graffiti as a product of imprisonment and a trace of detention, beyond its value as historical testimony or within anthropological and criminological analysis, is still lacking. As Jaqueline Wilson emphasizes, 'compared to the

[3] GREENBLATT 1990.
[4] Ibid., p. 21.
[5] On prison art in the United States, see: KORNFELD 1997; FLEETWOOD 2020.
[6] On historical graffiti as sources, see: LOHMANN 2018. On contemporary graffiti, see: HÄUSER 2021. On prison graffiti, see: WILSON 2008; WILSON 2016. The latter is the only comparative study on (Australian) prison graffiti offering methodological tools and some universal themes. This essay also contains a bibliography on the emerging research field of prison graffiti.
[7] On the graffiti of the Steri Inquisition prisons in Palermo, see: FIUME 2017; FIUME 2018; FIUME 2021. See also PALMER 2016.

abundance of research into graffiti created in the general urban environment, [...] the prison variety has received scant attention'.[8] A reflection on inmate graffiti can make a fundamental contribution not only to the study of this form of expression in general, but also to the discourse on prison space and the question of art in conditions of deprivation and detention. In recent decades, interest in graffiti in their many forms has grown exponentially, as has the specialized literature on the subject. Disciplines as diverse as art history, archaeology, history, anthropology, and also the art market and art criticism – all find the sedimentation of signs on the walls and the counterculture of graffiti to be an immense source of study, interpretation, and exhibition.[9]

The phenomenon of graffiti lends itself to different readings, definitions, and understandings. They can be votive or subversive gestures, acts of penitence or resistance, and much more, but they can also be the result of a simple automatic and repetitive movement, without any communicative or artistic intention.[10] Graffiti are a ubiquitous and timeless practice that affects different contexts (natural, urban, social, religious, political), different spaces (public, private, open, closed), and different surfaces (wall, skin, rocks, plants). The diversity of techniques, styles, genres and subgenres does not allow for rigid classifications, despite attempts to do so.

Graffiti have been observed in penal institutions for centuries, where they can serve as a form of self-expression or as a communication between prisoners. Like urban graffiti, they can be a territorial boundary marking or an indication of a crew or group affiliation. However, in prison they challenge authority and hierarchies and, in general, they are different from other graffiti because they are produced under specific circumstances and in spite of constraints imposed by the carceral environment.

By studying prison graffiti, we can gain insight into the experiences, perspectives, and cultural values of those who are incarcerated, as well as the changing nature of institutional power and control. They have therefore been used as a source of historical information about the society that produced them, the exercise of power of which they are an expression, and the

[8] WILSON 2016.

[9] INGRID (Informationssystem Graffiti in Deutschland) is a graffiti database project of the Universität Paderborn and the Karlsruher Institut für Technologie in Germany (https://www.uni-paderborn.de/forschungsprojekte/ingrid).

[10] See the contribution by Elizabeth Hoak-Doering in section 3 in this volume.

many meanings and functions that these signs were meant to fulfill.[11] Of course, each prison is a unique case. Each has its own forms of detention and control, types of people detained, degree of freedom the inmates may enjoy, and so on. These features have a bearing on the graffiti produced and on their state of preservation.

Before proceeding, it is crucial to define the term 'prison graffiti' and to ask whether or not it is a distinct genre within the field of graffiti; to understand if it is a specific form of expression in terms of their purpose, execution, materiality, narrative strategy, and content. Here I use a selection of graffiti observed and photographed in Sollicciano prison in Florence during the artistic workshops of the GAP Project (2022).

Inmate graffiti cover cell walls and other surfaces in prisons – hostile places where the need for expression becomes vital (fig. 1). Produced under conditions of isolation, deprivation and repression, prison graffiti are responses to very specific impulses. They are the result of personal reactions to incarceration and subject to various physical, material, and mental limitations: isolation, oppression, censorship, lack of visual sources of inspiration, lack of tools for painting or scratching, reduced light and its consequences. Within the confines of prison, graffiti are a form of communication and expression, a way of documenting one's experience and marking one's presence in that environment. In this context, who are the intended audiences or recipients of the messages they convey? Who are the inmates addressing? Other inmates? Themselves? The world? The afterlife? One of the paradoxes of graffiti (and the prison ones in particular) is that these ephemeral and fragile signs on the wall are entrusted with the task of witnessing, remembering, marking a passage, and handing down memory.

How prison graffiti act as a form of subversion against the dominant power structures and their role in challenging the forms of control that shape the daily experiences of incarcerated people raises important questions about the role of creativity in the context of incarceration (fig. 2). What are the characteristics of prison graffiti? And what do they have in common with other forms of murals and exposed writings? In what follows I examine some specific characteristics, especially their temporal, spatial, and bodily dimensions, looking for constants and variations, similarities and differences, in order to understand whether it makes sense to seek points of contact between Inquisition prison and other inmate graffiti; whether it is correct to compare historical and contemporary phenomena. To this purpose, I propose

[11] In his essay on religious colonialism in Early Modern Malta, Russell Palmer considers 'aspects of surveillance, discipline, compliance, and resistance as evidenced by the material development of the inquisitorial prison and inmate graffiti', in PALMER 2016.

a reading of graffiti that goes beyond their textual or iconographic content to reflect on other categories, such as sign, gesture, and surface.

Gesture and Time

From the apotropaic symbolism in Pompei,[12] to the evidence of ritual acts and sorcery in medieval churches,[13] to the numerous examples of esoteric mystical symbols in the Inquisition prisons of Palermo,[14] graffiti often have the function of protecting from demons or from the dangers of the physical world, and to ward off evil forces. This human need, which has always existed, is particularly felt in a hostile environment, where graffiti go hand in hand with the need for protection. Not surprisingly, many walls in historical prisons show magical and devotional marks as requests for blessings and salvation.[15]

Devotion is present not only in the iconography and symbology, but in the gesture itself, the physical act of carving, beyond the content .[16] This is an important shift from the meaning to the gesture of graffiti, to the physical and sensory engagement of the body, which is intimately linked to the spatial and temporal dimension of the contexts in which people made these markings.[17] Carving can be a ritual meditation, a form of sublimation, and even a means of survival in prison and other spaces of confinement.

Fernando Nannetti's work, created during fifteen years of isolation and alienation at Volterra Psychiatric Hospital, also reminds us that temporality is a crucial factor in graffiti practice. His long frieze, considered a masterpiece of Art Brut, contains a universe of carved letters and symbols. Not only are his carvings a condensation of memories and fantasies, they are also the physical trace of powerful acts of resistance against oppressive practices in the psychiatric system, and an assertion of Nannetti's own autonomy, creativity, and agency.[18]

While graffiti in urban space is an illegal act, done in the shortest possible time (graffiti artists risk injury, arrest, and other forms of punishment), they are also highly ritualized and performative gestures, improved by endless repetition until their perfection. From the point

[12] DE ABREU FUNARI 1995.
[13] CHAMPION 2015; EASTMOND 2015; HUTTON 2016.
[14] MANNELLA 2021. See the contribution by Pier L. J. Mannella in section 1 in this volume.
[15] In his book *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages* (2008), Valentin Groebner discusses the role of graffiti on medieval city walls, emphasizing the crucial importance of those signs for the survival of people living in late medieval cities: 'violence was a very real outcome for those unable to read correctly', in CROSSGROVE 2010.
[16] STERN 2018.
[17] See the contribution by Elizabeth Hoak-Doering in section 3 in this volume.
[18] TEDESCHI 2000; PEIRY 2020. See also the contribution by Virginia Di Bari in volume 2 in this volume.

of view of temporality, prison graffiti are the exact opposite: a way of using and marking time,[19] which is represented in various forms (fig. 3).

Body and Crime

The bodily or corporeal dimension is an essential aspect of graffiti, especially prison graffiti. In the prisons of the Early Modern Inquisition, the prisoners' bodies are contained within the walls themselves, since the color they used to paint was made from powdered clay of the floor mixed with organic liquids, such as saliva and urine.[20] The close relationship between graffiti and the body is also evident in the phenomenon of prison tattoos: 'Tattoo art, its style and images, whether on skin or other surfaces, is the most admired, most wide-spread, most coveted of all that is considered art in prison'.[21] Tattoos play an important role as self-identification, but can also be an 'aggressive aesthetics of the skin' linked to practices of stigmatization and related to slavery and other forms violence, as a long tradition from Greek slave stigmata to Auschwitz number tattooing testifies.[22]

Prison tattoos can communicate gang affiliation or social identity, and they can also be forms of protection and self-defense. Like graffiti, they can be seen as a reaction or rebellion against the oppressive conditions of the prison system. The physical act of creating a tattoo also carries risks, both in terms of health issues and the potential consequences of being caught by prison authorities. This aspect of prison tattoos is similar to that of graffiti, where artists often work in illegal or dangerous conditions to create their tags. In his anti-ornamental manifesto, the famous pamphlet *Ornament and Crime* (1908), Adolf Loos went so far as to suggest a close relationship between tattooing and crime.[23]

In Chicano art, religious iconography such as the Virgin of Guadalupe and other devotional symbols and icons on the walls can also be found on the skin. Chicano art, which emerged in the 1960s as a form of artistic expression for Mexican Americans in the United States, has a

[19] FLEETWOOD 2020.
[20] FIUME 2017, p. 16. See also the contribution by Giovanna Fiume in section 1 in this volume.
[21] KORNFELD 1997, p. 27.
[22] DÄRMANN 2017, p. 16.
[23] 'The Papuan slaughters his enemies and devours them. He is no criminal. If, however, the modern man slaughters and devours somebody, he is a criminal or a degenerate. The Papuan tattoos his skin, his boat, his oar, in short, everything that is within his reach. He is no criminal. The modern man who tattoos himself is a criminal or a degenerate. There are prisons where eighty percent of the inmates bear tattoos. Those who are tattooed but are not imprisoned are latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats. If a tattooed person dies at liberty, it is only that he died a few years before he committed a murder.', published in WARD, MILLER 2002, p. 29. On this see also CANALES, HERSCHER 2005.

deep relationship with prison culture, where tattooing is an expression of identity and belonging in the context of incarceration.[24] In other cultures, too, tattoos both convey meaning and conceal a language in a diversity of situations, from the complex codes among Russian criminal tattoos to the way Brazilian *pixação*, a form of graffiti writing, has been considered to be criminal tattoos on the skin of the city.[25]

In a recent essay, Kai Kappel discusses concentration camp tattoos as 'public art' and asks whether the tattooing practiced in Auschwitz on the skin of prisoners is appropriate to symbolically represent the unprecedented crimes of National Socialism.[26] Beyond the views on this specific topic of German *Erinnerungskultur*, it is important to emphasize the relationship between graffiti, crime, tattooing, and public art, and the fact that these seemingly distant worlds often trespass into each other.

Ruskin and Patina

Prison graffiti are a trace of people passing through and a testimony to their suffering and deprivation. They are also a historical incrustation, a 'protective skin' saving the incarcerated from oblivion and annihilation and showing posterity how they interacted with their living environment. Perhaps graffiti can be thought of in terms of the patina that Ruskin praised as essential to the meaning of architecture. If we overcome the distinction between natural and artificial or man-made patina, considering the layer covering the surfaces as the result of environmental influences and social practices, an analogy between graffiti and patina, both emanations of the past and a repository of memory, might be useful.[27] What is this patina? Ruskin believed that patina was evidence of an object's history, or the way it had interacted with its environment over time. For him, the beauty of patina lay in its ability to reveal traces of the past and testify to the life and material individuality of a building. He was particularly interested in the patina of architectural structures, which revealed the natural, social, and cultural forces that had shaped them over the centuries:

> It is in that golden stain of time, that we are to look for the real light, and colour, and preciousness of architecture; and it is not until a building has assumed this character, till it has been entrusted with the fame, and hallowed by the deeds of men, till its walls have been witnesses of suffering, and its pillars rise out of the shadows of death, that its existence, more lasting as it is than that of the

[24] DEMELLO, RUBIN 2000; OLGUÍN 2010; BRONNIKOV 2018; HALL 1997.
[25] BARBOSA PEREIRA 2020.
[26] KAPPEL 2017.
[27] The concept of graffiti as patina goes beyond the scope of this essay and will be analyzed in-depth elsewhere. On the concept of patina in the field of urban conservation, see ZANCHETI et al. 2006.

> natural objects of the world around it, can be gifted with even so much as these possess, of language and of life.[28]

What are the consequences, then, of this graffiti-patina parallel in terms of conservation and heritage discourse? The approach taken by Paul Graves-Brown and John Schofield in their study of the graffiti that the punk group the Sex Pistols left in their London apartment is a case in point.[29] The authors explored and recorded these graffiti as 'anti-heritage', using the methodology of the archaeology of the contemporary past and adopting a more inclusive, socially diverse interpretation of heritage. According to them, 'the fact that the graffiti could be considered rude, offensive and uncomfortable merely enhances their status and significance'.[30]

Recent studies are increasingly more interested in the role that these ephemeral traces play in the (historical, social and political) production of space, whereby graffiti can transform an abstract space (or non-place) into an anthropological place, by introducing relationships, meanings, and histories.[31] They are a living matter that ignore or challenge architectural, spatial, and power structures and propose an alternative (dis)order.[32] This is as true for prison graffiti as it is for the others, but in prisons and places of confinement where 'walls have been witnesses to suffering', to use Ruskin's words, the conditions of deprivation, lack of freedom, and the imposition of total control add value to, and amplify their meanings.

In the case of prison graffiti, the patina is not a superficial layer but instead acquires depth and thickness, like the *Altlasten* of a site embedding the soil. Ruskin offers a radically modern approach to the study of prison graffiti (and beyond) in his environmental thinking,[33] his sense of the relationship between patina and human experience, and his consideration of human suffering in the stones of the walls. His words make clear the ways in which prison graffiti, considered in the context of the broader issue of patina, have a significance that distinguishes them from 'free' graffiti. They project a different light, at once darker and brighter, which allows us to peer into the abyss of the dark past of incarcerated people, and at the same time to recognize in this accumulation of marks the brightness of an individual

[28] RUSKIN 1849, p. 155.
[29] GRAVES-BROWN, SCHOFIELD 2011.
[30] Ibid.
[31] FALETRA 2020.
[32] SCHACHTER 2014.
[33] For his interest in ecological holism and conservation issues, Ruskin is regarded as a pivotal figure in ecological thinking. On Ruskin's early environmental approach, see for example FROST 2016.

and collective act of resistance. A message of hope written on the wall of Sollicciano prison in Florence reads: 'The storm does not come to destroy, it almost always comes to clean up' (fig. 4). After all – the black holes, the darkest objects in the universe, and the supernovae, the brightest stars, are related phenomena.

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Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

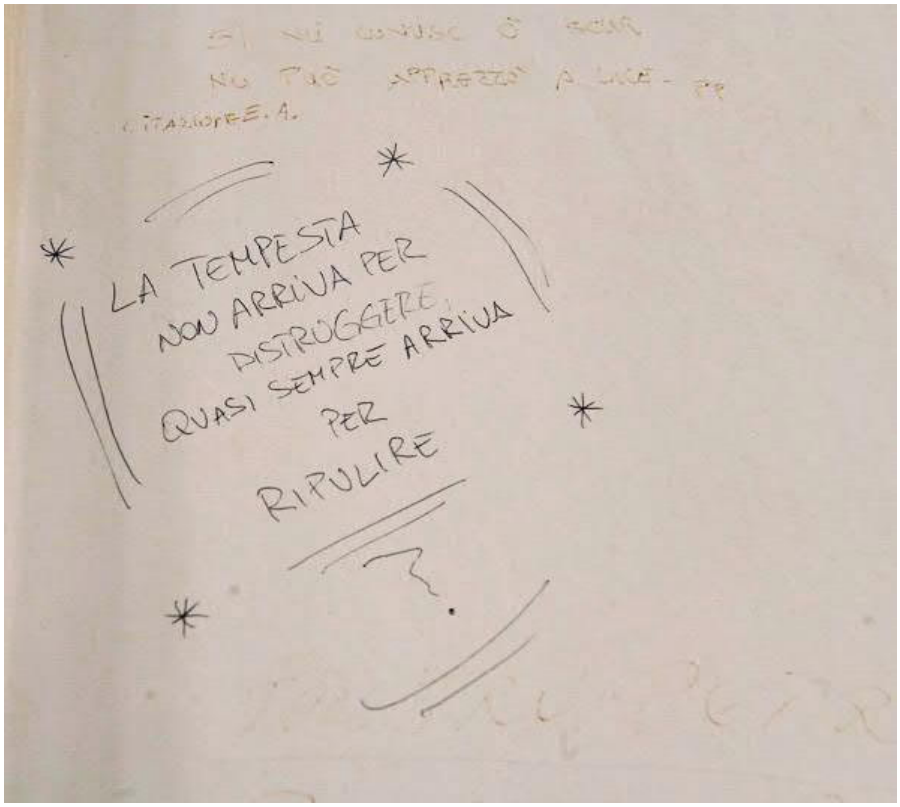

Fig. 4

* Photographs by Martha Cooper, Sollicciano Prison, Florence 2022–2023

1 Historical Graffiti and Inquisition Prisons

Di la desiderata libertati: The Graffiti of the Palermitan Holy Office's Secret Prisons

Rita Foti

In Sicily, the Spanish Inquisition – the Holy Office – was both tribunal and prison for religious and political crimes, a centralized and efficient power installed to protect the Spanish monarchy and Sicily itself against 'infidels, heretics and rebels'.[1] At the same time, it was a palpable and ominous threat in the public imagination and in individuals' consciousness, a social reality of great immediacy and visibility. Established in Palermo in 1487, it underwent several changes in premises before its early-seventeenth-century relocation to the thirteenth-century *Hosterium magnum*, constructed by the Chiaramonte family in the square of Piano della Marina, where it remained until its abolition in 1782. Its adjoining prisons, like any other modern spaces of *enfermement*, curtailed their inmates' freedom of movement and communication. In this context of constraint and suffering, the gesture of writing was one of few available forms of action, of freedom, of resistance to the passage of time, to the fear of interrogation and torture, to the awaiting of judgment and its anguish; it expressed a conscious will to organize and transmit a memory of self. Out of an instinctive 'communicative imperative',[2] prisoners appropriated spaces not intended for writing, sharing their compulsion to leave visible evidence of their existence. In Leonardo Sciascia's words, it was there that they left their 'soundless cries': fragments of prisoners' conversations with themselves, with imaginary listeners and with the prison community. In that performative act of communication, they transformed the place of their reclusion into a document-monument of commemorative and symbolic import.[3] These 'graffiti' belong to the very epidermis and history of the building and the site that preserve them, to which they owe their enormous value as an historical and artistic legacy.

The graffiti of the Palermitan Inquisition were among the first of Italy's modern-era prison graffiti to be studied. Giuseppe Pitrè's well-known study was published posthumously in 1940, detailing the 1906 identification of six of the tribunal's cells during one of the many

[1] FIUME 2021, p. 74. On the Inquisition in Sicily, see the bibliography cited therein.
[2] MIGLIO, TEDESCHI 2012, vol. 2, p. 605.
[3] The reference to 'document-monuments' is taken from LE GOFF 1978.

refurbishments of the Chiaramonte Palace premises.[4] Having been asked to inspect them, the Sicilian ethnologist personally stripped the whitewash from the walls of three of the cells for months. Under successive layers of aged paint, he found a throng 'of figures, drawings, inscriptions and verses' that he entitled 'prison palimpsests': lines upon lines, drawings upon drawings, writings upon writings.[5] Pitrè left a dense study of those palimpsests, lifting their veil and making them intelligible, transporting them from the realm of coincidence toward a landscape that could be and needed to be reconstructed. Pitrè's innovative and impassioned work opened the way – albeit across a discontinuous route marked by phases of degradation, neglect and inattention – to subsequent important discoveries in and restorations of the Inquisitional prisons. The history of the graffiti from their discovery until now, interwoven with the inevitable context of the Palermitan Holy Office's own history, has been that of their progressive resurfacing and transformation into objects of analysis. Recent studies have finally accorded them the status of 'a primary source of great importance and authenticity, as unforeseen as it is neglected',[6] making their site a veritable hub of works.[7] Parallel with historical research, the need for their archiving has been urgently felt: the need to elucidate, describe and thus systematically document this extraordinary legacy – a textual and artistic microcosm still largely undivulged – for the purposes of research, access and conservation.

How Should Historical Graffiti Be Studied?

From Palaeolithic cave drawings through the substantial *corpora* of the Graeco-Roman, late-antique and early mediaeval periods to the street art of today, graffiti has a vivid and uninterrupted global history. Numerous scholars from different disciplines have tried to understand and define it and research on this 'continues to produce and constitute archives of immense historical importance'.[8] Indeed, 'Graffiti by its nature is cross-disciplinary'[9], located at the crossroads of archaeology, of palaeography, of epigraphy, of the history of language, of philology and the written word, of the history of religious beliefs, of anthropology and of the history of human emotion. Their vernacular represents not only an important social reality but also one of the most potent and authentic of all forms of artistic expression.

[4] PITRÈ 1940.
[5] Ibid., pp. 13–14.
[6] TEDESCHI 2014.
[7] FIUME 2021.
[8] FLEMING 2020, p. 30.
[9] LOVATA, OLTON 2015, p. 12.

Therefore, as Veronique Plesch has observed, to understand them it has been necessary to resort to a profusion of theoretical models and methodologies, 'all pertinent and none exclusive of the others'; a kind of 'theoretical opportunism' and 'methodological *bricolage*'.[10] It has thereby become possible to group them, in palaeographic terms, amongst epigraphs and to adopt their definition as proposed by Armando Petrucci: 'exposed writings'.[11] They do not seem to fit that category, however, in that they are not produced by technicians nor in observation of given canons of execution, nor in conformity with any principle of solemnity, formality, accuracy, accessibility, legibility, visibility or preservation thereof.[12] On the contrary, their dedicated literature defines them as the opportunistic inscriptions of non-professionals realized with the help of makeshift tools, marked by subjectivity and spontaneity.[13] Or, as Béatrice Fraenkel has suggested, they can be regarded from an anthropological point of view as action writings that transcend message-based communication and respond instead to a vast spectrum of functions, expressing cultural processes of appropriation and re-elaboration. Inscriptions in a given space are defined by their effects: they mark, establish, differentiate.[14] And again, graffiti 'conveys content insofar as it is writing, but at the same time it is inseparable from its support and the context in which it is found. Content, support and context constitute graffiti'. [15] Each graffito thus differs from others according to its place and time. The study of historical graffiti in particular is a complex operation, a true hermeneutic exegesis that must balance content, form, function and medium, that must reconstruct the historical context of its subjects' production, investigate the connections between the communicative, artistic and performative dimensions of its writing, emphasize the plurality and diversity of its writers, their individual history and their 'mental set', as Ernst Gombrich put it.[16] Such research necessitates the support of the material sciences and of digital and information technologies. It requires protocols for preservation and conservation. This poses both general and site-specific methodological problems.[17] The application of these principles to the wall writings of Palermo's Holy Office, which we call 'graffiti' irrespective of the term's stricter definitions or of the techniques of their execution,

[10] PLESCH 2014.
[11]PETRUCCI 1997.
[12] CASTILLO GÓMEZ 2020.
[13] LECLERCQ 1925.
[14] FRAENKEL 2007.
[15] Translated by the author from TRENTIN 2011, p. 141.
[16] GOMBRICH 2002.
[17] FLEMING 2020, p. 29.

has the merit of guaranteeing them a peculiar and exclusive space within the scholarly subset of prison inscriptions, whether with regards to their identification, description and interpretation or with regards to the methods of their study and comparison. In concrete terms, building upon my own professional historical-archival experience, I have endeavoured to identify and describe every drawing and to transcribe and discuss every text on the prisons' walls. From these single subjects and fragments I have continued, where possible, to recompose the whole, to reunite and to establish relationships; to link and compare the drawings, writings and texts as well as the different hands of their writers; to identify chronologies, correlations, typologies, recurrences and likely authors; to posit evidence and interpretative hypotheses.

On that note, it has to be stressed that the prisons' ambit of religious crimes streamlined the graffiti's authors and somewhat influenced the choice of themes and subjects represented in their handiwork; as such, individuals' micro-stories illuminate their writings' meanings. And not only that. Since the 'temperament and positioning of a site' determine written artefacts 'circumstances and type',[18] the relationships that prisoners had with the site are important: with the judicial institution, with the prison community. Equally important are the different ways that they occupied, took possession of and reconfigured the environment of their detention, the ways that they created an affective relationship with those walls in order to express their spirituality, thoughts and feelings there. Finally, vital too was their own literary and artistic culture. Even more important was their prison experience, not only individually but collectively, in that 'behind every graffiti inscription is the encouragement, advice, example, and provocation of another' and 'in a more theoretical sense, however, we might say that no one writes alone'.[19] A 'sort of complicity' seems to have bound these scribes, whereby those of later generation 'juxtapose their presence with that of others, even when they do not overlap' in space and time.[20] In many cases we are confronted with a collage, a patchwork of hands and their interpolation into a continuum. As texts, they become open to manifold readings that in turn are verifiable only by circumstantial evidence. If to this we then add their layering and overlapping – the coexistence of drawings and inscriptions by different hands or by single authors of inconsistent hand or orthography – we can better understand some of the critical issues concerning our source material. In this context, handwriting and palaeographic

[18] CANALI, CAVALLO 1991, p. 12.
[19] FLEMING 2020, p. 32.
[20] Translated by the author from MIGLIO 1997, p. 59.

analysis may be the most suitable and refined key to identifying the graffiti's individual authors. Comparing some recurring features and peculiarities of the writings' visual aspects (the ductus, dimension and form of certain characters and signs) – attention to their *mise en page* – provides useful cues for judging the identity of a given text. It is both difficult and dangerous, on the other hand, to interpret such source material on purely formal grounds without external documentary data. Any resulting analyses therefore need to be integrated into the reconstruction of their subjects' broader historical and legal contexts, the biographies of the prisoners and the study of the content and language of their texts. The imperative of understanding them therefore necessitates a methodological approach *à la* Petrucci, which unites palaeography and social history. Thus familiar questions are asked of the inscriptions: not only *what* was written, nor *when*, *where* and *how*, but also *who* wrote and *why*.[21] Armed with these inevitable postulates, it has been possible to distinguish a *corpus* of the Palermitan Inquisition's prison graffiti; one to be understood on its own terms before all else.[22] Palermo's *corpus* represents a crucial witness of the practice of writing and drawing on walls as applied to a specific historical period and a specific context: that of seventeenth-and-eighteenth-century prisons and of the Inquisition of their era. Thus, graffiti also becomes an indispensable and irreplaceable primary source that juxtaposes those prison walls with hitherto-rarefied archives as another face of written memory. It broadens purviews, marks disjunctions and prompts reconsideration of the tools, ambits and vernaculars of the individual disciplines involved, beginning with historical and documentary research.

Unfolding the Corpus

Impressive, spontaneous but also thoughtful; unofficial, unsolicited but yet in some cases perhaps 'inspired' by their Inquisitional environment; certainly tolerated and accepted; wrought by prisoners on those inviting walls of such unfavourable height and verticality; executed in the presence of only a few cellmates (an average of three or four) in spacious but murky spaces illuminated only by narrow slits; accomplished with difficulty and cost in time by means of materials scavenged locally or externally procured through the complicity of jailers; executed in charcoal, lampblack, sanguine or powdered-terracotta *cocciopesto* in combination with natural binders and pigments – mostly red, more or less saturated, and

[21] PETRUCCI 1969, pp. 157-158; see also CASTILLO GÓMEZ 2022.
[22] See FOTI 2023.

black or in some cases green; and buried over time under several layers of whitewash. A multitude of writings and drawings are thus condensed in the walls of the Palermitan Inquisition's *cárceles secretas*.

First, it can be said that our *corpus*, in its consistency and richness, represents a *unicum* relative to comparable sites. Constructed in the early seventeenth century, the secret prisons consisted of eight ground-floor cells, the *carceles bajas*, and six others – the *carceles altas* – on the floor above, connected by a staircase of twenty-four steps.[23] 297 illustrative images and 264 inscriptions have been found on their walls. In almost all cases they consist of painted rather than incised inscriptions; as such, few amongst their number are *graffiti* in the etymological sense. The *corpus* extends from the early seventeenth century (1606) to the early eighteenth century, with a heightening of production in the mid-seventeenth century. Their overall state of preservation is mediocre, with lacunar sections and areas in poor or execrable condition.

Regarding the inscriptions and their language, it is important to underline that, with few exceptions, texts are either Latin or vernacular Italian. Latin inscriptions constitute almost half of the total (121; 46%), followed by those in Tuscan/Italian (59; 22%) and Sicilian (42; 16%). A group by a single scribe are written in English (6), one in Spanish and two in Hebrew characters. Finally, a number are of indeterminate language by fault of their dire condition and/or illegibility (33; 13%). A few examples are bilingual (Latin and vernacular, Latin and English). The majority of the texts are in prose (a full 80%). The remaining texts are in verse – and are, interestingly, mainly in Sicilian.[24]

From a palaeographic point of view, they reflect and exemplify the richness and instability of the written world of their era. The variations and oscillations peculiar to wall writings mark them as 'writings of compromise' that cannot be classified according to any established nomenclature.[25] Executed on open stretches of wall, within organized and carefully designed boundaries or again in the interstices between images, some are rendered in a sure and expert hand, with solid compositional arrangement, with clear, linear and accurate ductus, flow and hand, with adequate punctuation – worthy, overall, of a competent calligrapher. Here they resemble epigraphic texts, there text as it appears on paper. They use language and forms typical of documentary hands and of notarial subscriptions, such as shorthand (abundantly

[23] FIUME 2021, pp. 191–218.
[24] For a more in-depth analyses see FOTI 2023.
[25] GIOVÈ MARCHIOLI 2013, p. 53.

present and variously signalled), compendia, Tironian notes, ligatures, apices, nexuses and inserted or superscribed letters. In some cases, they flaunt bolder or more elegant choices such as monograms, decorative stems, whorls, decorated letters, curlicues and ornamental friezes of iconographic significance. Others, by contrast, are simpler: written without care or poorly handled, of irregular features haphazardly combined. Rendered in first or third person, they use majuscules, epigraphic capitals or miniscules (set or cursive); some examples display mixed upper-and-lower-case characters, others the use of *scriptio continua*. Notably, some authors use a plurality of spellings and codes. How are the texts arranged and connected to the graffiti's iconography and images? We find them both outside the rendered image or inside, offstage or onstage, flanking saints in imitation of the painted captions in polyptychs and votive panels, encroaching on spaces devoted to drawings or on spaces left free; on the surfaces of illusory pedestals, crosses, books of hours, sarcophagi, monstrances and urns; they are enclosed in boxes, frames, decorative cartouches or architectural elements, or 'engraved' on marble tablets. Some are true 'facilitative' texts such as, for example, the recurring labelling of saints; others are the authors' appeals to the images (prayers and devotional texts) or to the reader, whether inserted in cartouches or otherwise; still others are poetic texts such as spiritual-religious or captivity-themed Sicilian octaves, while some other texts report memories of events or even personal narratives. Across their breadth, they are captions, passages from the scriptures, from liturgy (psalms, hymns, antiphons) or from the philosophical-theological repertory; they are epigrams,[26] pious recollections, prayers, invocations and exhortations, allusions, denunciations, invectives, admonitions, aphorisms, chronicles, pleas for help, outpourings of the soul (of fear, desperation, despair), formulae attached to votive offerings, colophons, names, dates, creators' signatures, rhymes, sonnets and, in some of the most significant instances, genuine poetic cycles.

What are the prisons' iconographies? A total of 297 subjects and/or themes have been identified, of which a small part (31) is not clearly visible or interpretable. One of the study's most important outcomes concerns the identification of numerous pictorial cycles – cycles respectively sanctoral and/or religious, architectural-decorative or poetic – that extend to almost all of the cells. As concerns type: depictions of religious narrative outnumber those of secular narrative to the extent that, considering the inscriptions' corresponding content, it is possible to infer a sacralisation process in the prisons, characterized by a dialectic between

[26] They are collected as 'citazioni-reliquia' (relic-quotations) by POZZI 1997, p. 32.

devotion, denunciation and deception, between religion and magic, which invites scholars to investigate the prisoners' religious and artistic perspectives in a broader sense: their forms, themes, expressions and practices. The site is rich in casuistry and also includes recurring subjects. *Christus patiens* appears more often than *Christus triumphans*, corresponding to the graffiti's many crosses and its many, varied and idiosyncratic references to Golgotha-Calvary. The risen Christ also features, however, while one cycle depicts Christ after the model of the Byzantine *Pantocrator*. Also appearing are the Marian themes of Our Lady of the Assumption, the Virgin Crowned, Our Lady of the Rosary and the Virgin Hodegetria; or female saints (especially martyrs), archangels, apostles, the fathers and doctors of the Church, patron saints (civic or otherwise) and 'founding founders of religions': such objects of liturgical, doctrinal and exegetical elaboration over the centuries are represented many times on the prisons' walls. Further subjects include many winged cherub heads, sepulchres, hands joined in prayer and liturgical objects. *Historia salutis*, Christian piety in its various forms, theology, liturgy, acts of devotion and art history are here intimately intertwined. 'It is the great story of compassion – that is, of investment in the passions (both sorrow and joy) of holy personages'[27] and, in the graffiti's combinations of image and text, of prayer and personal devotion.

Among the most frequently recurring secular subjects – beyond the architectural-decorative compositions that dominate entire walls – are figures of exotic appearance, young women either nude or in floral garments, towers and cannons, feminine faces, landscape scenes, naturalistic elements, birds, snakes, dragons, sun and moon, shields and coats of arms, a pentacle, cornucopias and masks, pierced hearts, notches measuring time, handprints and much more. Foremost are representations of variously proportioned ships, often in naval battles. One of the most industrious prisoners even replicated the map of Sicily twice over, furnished with a legend and the names and symbols of cities (figs. 1–2–3–4).

In most cases, the graffiti are anonymous and undated. Makers' signatures, followed by the expressions *fecit*, *scripsit*, *pinsit*, *pingebat* or otherwise, are present in very few cases. By way of a general impression, it can be concluded that our *corpus* was mostly created between the beginning of the seventeenth century (1606) and its second half by a small number of prisoners. Some of them left only microtexts, but in almost every cell one or more 'textual

[27] Ibid., p. 27.

display programmes', as Armando Petrucci puts it,[28] has been identified. On this basis I have drawn the conclusion that much was written by few.

What are the sources and models that intermittently inform this graffiti, to which it alludes and by which it is inspired? Generally speaking, it presents translations and reinventions of themes and elements derived from coeval religious, artistic and literary culture and from sources near at hand, tending toward specificity (in range and selection of content, lexis and so forth) and simplification (in inscriptions' manner of execution, their composition) on account of the graffiti's prison context, its support and its executors' given skill sets. This is not, however, to discount its originality or authenticity, nor a certain conceptual density throughout.

Regarding questions of iconography, the graffiti's sanctoral component essentially reprises given figures' 'hagiographic coordinates' and, availing itself of entrenched tradition, delves into theological and scriptural lore (the biblical texts, of course, flanked by apocrypha, mediaeval legendaries such as the *Passions* or Jacopo da Varagine's *Legenda aurea*, liturgical feasts and also certain classical poetic texts and local venerations). Also illustrated are theological concepts such as the Trinity, the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit, the Incarnation, the two Passion cycles and the Death and Resurrection of Christ, including the *Descensus Christi ad inferos*. The graffiti's ecclesiastic iconography assumes typical forms of church decoration and furnishings such as liturgical accoutrements, *vasa sacra*, tabernacles, shrines, vestments, symbols of office (mitres and crosiers), statues, pulpits for sermons and triptychs. The decorative schemes that extend across entire prison cells contain elements comparable to the staging – comprising ephemeral constructions and triumphal arches – erected in urban settings on the occasion of public festivals and ceremonies, particularly those of a religious character. They also bear comparison with the architecture of private buildings, recalling the Renaissance themes of the *belvedere* and the 'portico scene' and are characterized by the use of floral and vegetal decorations. Examples include rhythmic alternations of delicate columns or long balustraded balconies bearing vases or amphorae filled with flowers, often daisies.[29]

The graffiti's series of poetic cycles in Sicilian octaves correspond in particular to that generation of Palermitan poets and intellectuals who lived through the city's plague epidemic and were linked in various ways to the revolution of 1647 and to the scholarly academies,

[28] PETRUCCI 1969, p. 89.
[29] CIVILETTO 2019, pp. 45–46.

especially Palermo's *Accademia dei Riaccesi.*[30] The cycles reprise and rework motifs from an associated literary culture even as they treat the experience of incarceration, projecting the long wave of a 'second Sicilian poetics' as far as these prison cells.[31] The prison has become a veritable *Canzoniere* and even a page from the *Divine Comedy*.

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[30] FIUME 2021, pp. 295–302.
[31] Ibid., p. 302.

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Fig. 1 *Sanctoral cycle/decorative cycle/exposed inscription* (ground floor, cell I, central wall), Secret Prisons of the Inquisition, Palazzo Chiaramonte, Palermo

Fig. 2 *Annunciation and Incarnation/sanctoral cycle* (ground floor, cell II, central wall), Secret Prisons of the Inquisition, Palazzo Chiaramonte, Palermo

Fig. 3 *Descensus Christi ad inferos/ inscriptions in Sicilian vernacular (canzuni) and in English* (ground floor, cell II, central wall), Secret Prisons of the Inquisition, Palazzo Chiaramonte, Palermo

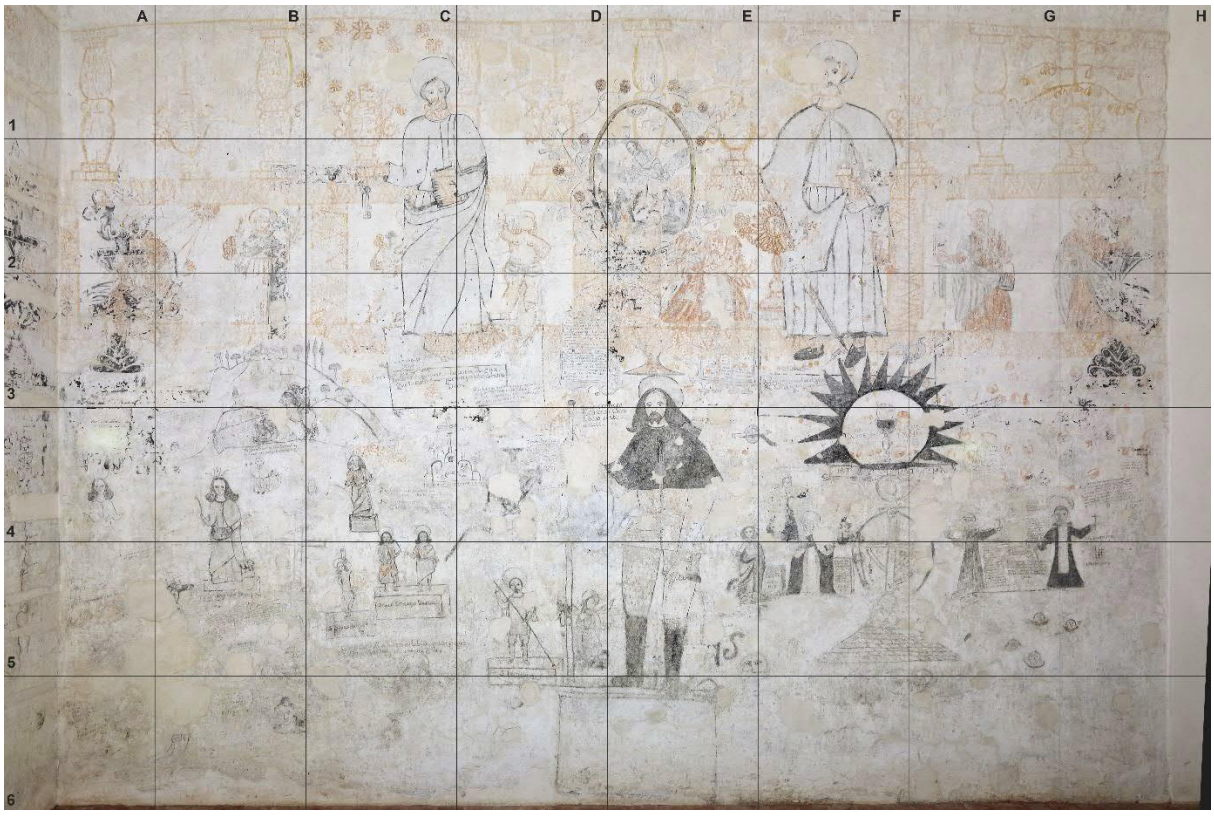

Fig. 4 *Sanctoral cycles/decorative cycles/inscriptions in Latin and Italian English* (first floor, cell V, right wall), Secret Prisons of the Inquisition, Palazzo Chiaramonte, Palermo

Steri Prison's Memories Rest on Brittle Foundations: How to Rethink Their Future

Giovanna Fiume

Certain difficulties inhibit reconstructions of the history of the Spanish Inquisition in Sicily, largely due to the state of its documentation, which has repeatedly suffered dispersion and destruction over time. During the 1516 revolt against Viceroy Ugo Moncada,[1] the rioting populace drove the inquisitor Melchor Cervera from Palermo and 'opened the secret prisons and freed the unfortunates imprisoned therein, put their archives to the torch — or rather, made away with [their documents] — and eliminated their greater part'.[2] Such was the first of the arsons and ransackings that the archive would endure. In 1517 Gianluca Squarcialupo replicated the revolt, which spread to Trapani, Catania, Agrigento, Termini Imerese and elsewhere on the island. The following year, five thousand Spanish soldiers and more than a thousand knights disembarked in Messina; Squarcialupo was slain and order restored. The three years from 1516 to 1518 were plagued by unrest and sedition, following which the tribunal's activity was suspended,[3] interrupting the continuity of its documentation.

Again: from 1568 to 1593 the Holy Office was relocated to the fort of Castello a Mare, erstwhile seat of the Viceroy, who reluctantly took up residence at the Royal Palace. The tribunal occupied the top floor, ill-bodingly above the castle's gunpowder cache. The presence of soldiers in the fort caused predictable problems, a lack of secrecy above all. The archives caught fire on 31 December 1589 for unknown reasons,[4] after which:

> To give remedy somewhat to the desolation, the Lord Inquisitors sounded a proclamation, that within a certain span of time, on pain of excommunication *latae sententiae*, all those who had writings of the aforementioned Holy Office [...] were to bear them to the aforementioned Holy Office. And so in part some remedy was given.[5]

The archives had by then burned twice.

On 19 August 1593, the Castello a Mare's powder magazine exploded: 'Unknown remained the perhaps unintentional cause. Up in smoke went most of the dwellings allocated to the Holy

[1] BAVIERA ALBANESE 1975–1976; CANCILA 2007.
[2] Translated by the author from LA MANTIA 1977, p. 53.
[3] LA LUMIA 1969; TRASSELLI 1982, pp. 509–721; GIARRIZZO 1989, pp. 135–140; LA MOTTA 2017.
[4] Archivio di Stato di Palermo (ASPa), Santo Uffizio, Ricevitoria, vol. 170. Atti di beni confiscati «post incendium archivii Tribunalis Sancti Officii successum XXXI decembris 3° Inditionis 1589 hora quinta noctis incirca», c. 109.
[5] DI MARZO 1869, p. 118.

Office, as did the spaces utilized as prisons. Many perished there.'[6] Further documents may have been destroyed on this occasion, which would represent the third such destruction of the Inquisition's documentary materials. Inquisitors Luis de Páramo and Domingo Llanes were mildly injured.[7] Trials were provisionally transferred to the convent of San Francesco, to which the accused had to be escorted from prison, costing valuable time and the grave discomfiture and hindrance of their visibility on public streets.[8] This rendered the tribunal's customary secrecy impossible and ultimately required that the relevant documentation leave its repository, which was strictly forbidden under ordinary conditions.

On March 29 1782, Viceroy Domenico Caracciolo, Marquis of Villamaina, notified the inquisitors of the decree abolishing the Sicilian tribunal.[9] The act's rationale, as a product of the 'age of enlightenment', is telling: there was 'no memory' of religious errors ever having occurred in the kingdom such as had compelled the tribunal's establishment elsewhere. Besides its redundancy, the tribunal had from the outset offended the local population, which had frequently appealed to the king against its excesses; despite having been enjoined to observe the form of trial prescribed by law, the tribunal had persisted in 'its ancient system' of secret denunciations, anonymous witnesses, the denial of defendants' right to legal defence and the presupposition of guilt. The soul of the Inquisition was the inviolability of its secrecy, as the Inquisitor General of Sicily himself sustained, arguing that wholesale suppression would be preferable to change in trial procedures. With this decree, 'The true intention that innocence should live secure under the protection of public laws'[10] at last prompted the king's abolition of the tribunal. The defence of the faith against doctrinal errors was thenceforth entrusted to the bishops, who acquired jurisdiction in religious trials.

On April 15, the Court of Royal Patrimony not only proposed to the Viceroy that the tribunal's premises be reallocated to the customs authority but also recommended the destruction of the 'minutes of criminal trials, paintings and otherwise', which had been guarded by the inquisitors with utmost 'jealousy in that they comprise relevant scabrous materials'[11]. It was thus rendered explicit that everything then effectively restricted or confidential could prove

[6] LA MANTIA 1977, p. 63.
[7] Modesto Gambacorta's report to the Lord Inquisitor of 10 September 1593, in C. A. Garufi, *Fatti e personaggi dell'Inquisizione in Sicilia* (1914–1921), Palermo, Sellerio, 1978, p. 284.
[8] Ibid., p. 285.
[9] On the abolition of the Inquisition see PONTIERI 1961, pp. 121–178.
[10] The relevant text appears in LA MANTIA 1977, p. 109.
[11] Ibid., p. 245.

compromising if brought to light. The court further judged the records in question worthless and unserviceable — and yet more so 'certain convicted offenders' shapeless portraits and monstrous paintings', of which it advised the disposal.[12] 27 June 1783 saw the resulting bonfire of mitres, sanbenitos,[13] portraits of prisoners sentenced to death and, above all, the criminal archive and its contents of trials, accusations, sentences, correspondence, reports and assorted information. The fire was lit within the Steri's 'little courtyard' — rather than any public place, such as the adjoining square of Piano della Marina — and burned until noon the next day or for several days, according to some chroniclers:[14] as ill-advised and destructive as all the bonfires that had preceded it. 'The erasure of the names and all other data concerning those tried by the Inquisition was to complete, through *damnatio memoriae*, the victory of those who had condemned them as living beings.'[15] The tribunal's civil archives, incorporating records pertinent to its accounts — including those of the prisons — and to the *privilegium fori*, joined the Palermo State Archives in 1854. There they were severely damaged by Allied bombing during World War II, entailing further loss of documents already decimated by the series of events here recounted.[16] The fact that Spain's Archivo Histórico Nacional (National Historical Archive) still conserves the *relaciones de causas* and the correspondence between the Palermo tribunal and the Supreme Tribunal in Madrid,[17] along with complete transcripts of certain trials, does little to compensate for the grave loss of documentary material suffered in Palermo.

Wall Inscriptions: The Fragility of the Ephemeral

Graffiti, drawings and inscriptions represent 'evidence somewhere between written and material sources. [They] communicate content as writing, but [are] at the same time

[12] Ibid., pp. 246–247.
[13] A short half-length garment composed of two rectangular lengths of fabric hemmed at the shoulders, leaving a gap for the head. This was accompanied by a *coroza*, a headdress in the form of a mitre, on which the crime committed was sometimes written, in MESSANA 2010a, p. 1361.
[14] Ibid., p. 248.
[15] PROSPERI 2000.
[16] BURGARELLA 1985–1986.
[17] The *relaciones de causas* were the Spanish Inquisition's district tribunals' annual reports, in which details were recorded of trials undertaken. These were sent to the Supreme Council of the Inquisition each year or on the occasion of autos-da-fé in the interests of supervising every district court's activities and proceedings, in BOEGLIN 2010, pp. 1309–1310. The auto-da-fé was the most spectacular expression of the Holy Office's judicial activity, a solemn ceremony that publicly displayed trials' verdicts and their resulting punishments, in MESSANA 2010b, pp. 124–126.

inseparable from their substrate and the context in which [they are] found'.[18] Those in question are prison graffiti by persons convicted for religious crimes. The Spanish Inquisition — established in Spain in 1478 and in Sicily in 1487 — underwent various relocations in Sicily with prisons in tow prior to the early seventeenth century, whereupon the *Hosterium magnum* (the Steri Palace) became its permanent home until its abolition in 1782. The Steri had been built in the fourteenth century by the Chiaramonte family; in 1603 *las cárceles nuevas* ('the new prisons') were added to the garden (*viridarium*) behind the palace.[19] Their design comprised eight cells alongside a ground-floor corridor, with the addition of six more on the first floor in 1630. Archived documents thereafter refer to the former as the 'lower' or 'old' prisons (*las cárceles bajas* or *viejas*) and the latter as the 'upper' or 'new' prisons (*las cárceles altas* or *nuevas*), while the two floors were connected by a staircase of twenty-four steps. Prisoners wrote and drew on their walls, or incised them, as if on a blank page; the products of these creative enterprises came to fruition gradually and with difficulty by means of materials found on site or procured externally through the complicity of jailers: in charcoal, lampblack, sanguine and *cocciopesto* (powdered earthenware), mixed with natural binders and pigments, mostly black or variably saturated reds, or in some cases green. All were covered periodically by successive layers of whitewash.

I feel compelled to assert that, considered against comparable case studies, this building represents an unicum by virtue of the consistency and richness of its textual contents. Between the ground floor cells (I–VIII) and those on the first-floor (I–III, V, VI), 297 figurative subjects and 264 inscriptions have been found. Almost all consist of drawn and written testimonies, whereas graffiti per se is confined to a few specimens. This corpus was accumulated over the period from the early seventeenth century (1606) to the early eighteenth century, with an increase in production during the mid-1600s. Its state of preservation is mediocre overall, with lacunar sections in poor or very poor condition.

Concerning the inscriptions: inscriptions in Latin constitute almost half of the total (121; 46%), followed by those in vernacular Tuscan/Italian (59; 22%) and Sicilian (42; 16%). A single English scribe accounts for a group of six. One is written in Spanish and two in Hebrew characters. Finally, others remain unidentified due to deterioration and/or illegibility (33;

[18] TRENTIN 2011, p. 141.
[19] GABRICI, LEVI 2003; LIMA 2015.

13%). A few samples are bilingual (Latin and vernacular, Latin and English). Prose texts are most numerous at a full 80%. Of the remainder in verse, the majority are in Sicilian.[20]

How were the drawings and graffiti executed? Through the research of Giuseppe Pitrè,[21] we know that iron protoxide was used for yellow, iron sesquioxide for red, lampblack or ink for black; green and dark red emerge in some drawings. The two cartographical drawings of Sicily in the prison's upper-floor cells were executed using 'a combination of black shoe dye and tomato paste, such as is often used in Sicily as sauce for pasta'.[22] Charcoal and lampblack were applied dry or with a brush. For the red drawings, the powdered clay of pavestones and the rust of chains were bound in organic liquids (saliva or urine), lemon juice, milk or egg white. The orange tint of some drawings implies an organic red pigment (or one mixed with an organic binder) and ochre. The most pictorially elaborate areas are concentrated in the last first-floor cell, especially on its left wall. We know the identity of their author in particular due to the trial of the jailer (*proveedor*) Pedro Cicio, accused of sexual overtures toward the prisoner Agueda Azzolini and of having sold oil to her (for the restoration of a faded rosary) and to the imprisoned Augustinian friar Damiano di San Michele Arcangelo for boiling as a component of his *pinturas*.[23] Analysis of their chemical composition has yielded the following conclusions:

> As far as concerns recognising the pigments used, it has been possible to venture hypotheses as to their nature [...]. The brown areas, given their yellowing in infrared false colour (IRFC1), may be composed of ochre; the same pigment was also used to heighten some details present on other walls (e.g., the partially red-tinted robes of Saint Euphemia and Saints Cosmas and Damian); blue-painted areas assume a vivid red colour in IRFC1 imaging, suggesting the use of [the powdered cobalt-rich glass] *smaltino*; the green-painted areas of the palms acquire a dark colour in IRFC1. Such a result is typical of copper resinate pigments [...]; the pink-coloured areas of the saints' robes reveal a yellow-orange fluorescence attributable to the use of lake pigments, while the off-yellow fluorescence evident in the face of Saint Christina may be attributable to the presence of an oily binder in the flesh tones. Carbon black was probably applied with a brush for the descriptive elements [...]. The latter observations indicate that the wall may have been painted by a single author who, moreover, must have possessed extensive knowledge of both painterly media and technical practice. In further confirmation, it bears mention that, historically, pigments such as copper resinate had to be prepared by expert hands, not being immediately commercially available. Furthermore, the use of varnish applied in glazes demonstrates expertise in the precise modulation of colour. One could therefore hypothesise that the wall of Saints in particular may have been executed by a skilled painter.[24]

[20] FOTI 2023.

[21] Giuseppe Pitrè (1841–1914), doctor, literary figure, philologist, ethnologist, senator of the Kingdom of Italy in 1914. Pitrè collected folk tales, testimonies, folk traditions, proverbs, customs, practices, beliefs and prejudices in both his 25-volume *Biblioteca delle tradizioni popolari siciliane*, published in Palermo between 1871 and 1913 and in his 16-volume *Curiosità popolari siciliane,* published between 1885 and 1899.

[22] DI VITA, 1910–1933, p. 109.

[23] Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), Inquisición, legajo 1746, expediente 32, c. 42r.

[24] MAZZEO, JOSEPH 2005.

Friar Damiano's skill is especially evident in his figures' flesh tones, which incorporate oil paint, calcium carbonate, glue and lead white.[25]

Metal objects of varied composition (the prisoners' chains themselves) were used to etch the plastered walls or to obtain the copper oxide used as red pigment. Additionally, chemical analyses carried out during the last restoration of the complex have revealed the particular fragility of its graffiti, inscriptions and wall drawings due to the notable porosity of the sedimentary stone of the building's construction and the dampness of its walls through condensation and infiltration, as well as the presence of soluble salts: nitrates and sulfates, carbonates, chlorides and oxalates. The nitrates and ammonia present are likely attributable to prisoners' bodily excretions. Chlorides are intimately linked to the building's location, its foundations having been set in a marine environment.[26] In a sense, biographical residues were 'embedded' in the prison walls through their textual embellishments.

The storied walls of the prison represent at once a written and a material source: authors, message, substrate and context form an inseparable whole and collectively comprise a 'document' with the prison as its archive. According to the International Council on Archives' definition, an archive is: 'The whole of the documents made and received by a juridical or physical person or organization in the conduct of affairs, and preserved.'[27]

It is differentiated from a collection by its unintentional character; that is, an archive is not formed through documents' deliberate compiling on the part of their producers. Documents are produced without thought to their preservation.[28]

Hence the *Inventario* (inventory), the catalogue of the Steri's graffiti realized by Rita Foti,[29] has treated these writings and drawings as archival material to be paleographically read, transcribed and interpreted. The attempt to identify incorporated pictorial cycles (the Way of the Cross, martyred saints, the founders of Orders and Congregations, Christ crucified or in glory, as Pantocrator or otherwise) and poetic cycles (hymnals, prison doggerel, etc.) is tantamount to identifying the essential connections and the rationale — technically, the 'archival bond' — that unites them, helping to elucidate their innate stratification (fig. 1).

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[25] PACHECO 1990.

[26] ALBERGHINA et al. 2010, p. 962.

[27] 'Archives', *Multilingual Archival Terminology* [website], <http://www.ciscra.org/mat/mat/term/64/1369>, accessed 6 May 2023.

[28] 'Vincolo archivistico: cos'è e a cosa serve nella Conservazione Digitale', *Ardesia* [website], 24 February 2023, <https://blog.ardesia.it/vincolo-archivistico-cos-e-a-cosa-serve-nella-conservazione-digitale>, accessed 9 May 2023

[29] FOTI 2023.

This paleographic reading has proven particularly effective, indeed becoming an extraordinary tool for identifying the authors of given writings and drawings. Such a tool, in addition to securing names and surnames, initials and dates, allows the nearest possible access to prisoners' identities, to the effect that Rita Foti has concluded that 'much was written by few': that is, the walls are authorial pages.

In the wake of the work of Vito La Mantia, Carlo Alberto Garufi and Giuseppe Pitrè,[30] Sicily has yielded a fertile body of research to the great advancement of knowledge of this 'artefact': a textual repository that represents a material and documentary source beneficial to study of the historical repression of religious ideas, sexual behaviour and political deviance (fig. 2).[31] At the same time, the Steri offers data on literacy and literature, grassroots religious practice and the diffusion of devotional iconographic models.

Thus far scholars have referred to archival documentation conserved at Madrid's National Historical Archive and Palermo's State Archives and Municipal Library; to these can now be added this new repository, even to the extent of reversing the relationship between judicial sources and graffiti: the former need no longer provide information on the latter, but wall inscriptions and graffiti (whether written or drawn) might lose their subordinate and ancillary character as sources and help answer questions concerning their authors' religiosity, their relationships with authority, inquisitorial legality and perceptions of justice and penance.

A Bittersweet Reflection

It was the Palermo ethnologist Giuseppe Pitrè who began the uncovering of the drawings and inscriptions. In field notes written between 1906 and 1916, he counted four (or perhaps five) layers of plaster on the walls of the cells due to periodic whitewashing,[32] presumably for reasons of hygiene (fig. 3).

Each layer of whitewash offered inmates a blank slate on which to exercise their creativity and confide their thoughts and feelings. Dates included with them suggest that the 2007 restoration saved the first and oldest of these layers (though a handful of fragments of later layers remain visible, especially in the upper prison); we know that the notable humidity of

[30] LA MANTIA 1977; GARUFI 1978; PITRÈ 1940; PITRÈ, SCIASCIA 1999.
[31] SCIUTI RUSSI 1983; SCIUTI RUSSI 1994; RENDA 1997; LEONARDI 2005; MESSANA 2007; MESSANA 2012; LA MOTTA 2019; FIUME, GARCÍA-ARENAL 2018a; FIUME, GARCÍA-ARENAL 2018b; FIUME 2017a; FIUME 2017b; FIUME 2021; FOTI 2023.
[32] PITRÈ 1940.

the site necessitated the enlargement of the windows for ventilation no sooner than the ground floor was built, while its construction in especially friable calcareous rock duly led to the absorption of prisoners' wastes, including the carbon dioxide of their breath, as remains true of latter-day visitors. All this contributes to the slow but inexorable degradation of these precious artefacts. The *Inventario* illustrates the unpleasant frequency with which the reading and transcription of given exemplars has been rendered impossible by their poor, sometimes execrable, state of preservation. Overall, only a small part survives of the abundant corpus once produced within, the remainder of which I would label a reliquary, as valuable as it is fragile. Some drawings and inscriptions documented by Pitrè no longer exist or have become illegible; they have been lost. In such cases, his transcriptions of texts and his reproductions of drawings constitute the only documentation remaining, a destiny that the *Inventario* will share if the wall artefacts' progressive disintegration is not halted.

Over time, the prisoners of the Inquisition have suffered repeated assaults on their memory by those who, intentionally or otherwise, have contributed to the erasure of their identities, the expression of their thought and the evidence of their existence. Such individuals and institutions can be identified as follows: firstly, the inquisitors, through a judicial procedure rooted in secrecy and the systematic dispersal and destruction of prisoners' writings, which preceded their authors (in the case of those euphemistically 'relaxed to the secular arm') into the flames. Secondly, the Viceroy Domenico Caracciolo's decree commanding the burning of almost all of the Palermo tribunal's archived documents — along with its penitential garments (the *sanbenitos*), its 'monstrous paintings', etc. — in 1783, the year after the tribunal's abolition Thirdly, as denounced by Leonardo Sciascia in 1977, Sicily's Superintendency of Cultural Heritage 'wreaked havoc on historical evidence perhaps unique in the world' during its attempt in the 1970s to restore the spaces of the hall now known as the Sala of Arms, which had contained numerous cells, spaces thereby 'devastated by the very authority [assigned with] the task of protecting all historical evidence and every work of art';[33] and fourth, the University of Palermo, which — over the fifteen years since the 2007 restoration — has poorly reconciled the imperatives of conservation, stewardship and the promotion of research with that of public engagement through targeted cultural marketing policies (fig. 4).

[33] Translated by the author from, PITRÈ, SCIASCIA, 1999, p. 22.

The repurposing of historic monuments (including sites' transformation into museums) is an extremely common practice in all times and places, inevitably involving the transformation of elements adapted to new functions: examples are countless and form part of scholars' customary experience.

Reuse distorts all or part of the original. I consider the Steri's secret prisons a monument-document. Given the characteristics illustrated herein, their reuse amounts to interpolation, manipulation and falsification of those documents. Any use of these spaces should be preceded by the digitization of the entire corpus and the construction of a database subdivided into different sections and categories within which existing knowledge can be integrated; this can become a true digital archive that will allow the gathering of data and the discovery of aspects and details of the graffiti not permitted by the traditional photographic reproduction used thus far. It will allow the deciphering of illegible and barely visible marks and the correction of previous transcriptions and interpretations.

The construction of this digital archive, considering the graffiti's highly fragile and ephemeral nature, would be the first and most important means of its integral study and protection: its documentation and its successful filing and digitization would provide the scholarly community with tools for the visualization, consultation, reading, description, contextualization, discussion and interactive interpretation of the wall inscriptions. Access to related documentary, archival, literary and bibliographical sources would also be improved: some already known and investigated, others yet to be identified and examined. Finally, the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies would allow total immersion in the cells. Onsite or offsite virtual tours would enrich the experience of the graffiti while simultaneously relieving visitor pressure and benefiting the site's ongoing preservation.

The University cannot subordinate conservation and research to the 'third mission', one of the goals of which is the 'production and management of cultural heritage'.[34] It is therefore necessary to find innovative and technologically advanced solutions, as many museums have done, in addressing the competing imperatives of conservation and dissemination. The judicious accessibility of this public good must be reconciled with its safeguarding.

[34] The 'third mission' addresses the public educational activities undertaken by universities in the promotion of culture; culture being understood as facilitating economic growth through the wider transmission of knowledge.

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Fig. 1 *Crucified Christ dragged in chains to Golgotha*, Secret Prisons of the Inquisition, Palazzo Chiaramonte, Palermo. Photo: Courtesy of Luciano Rizzuti

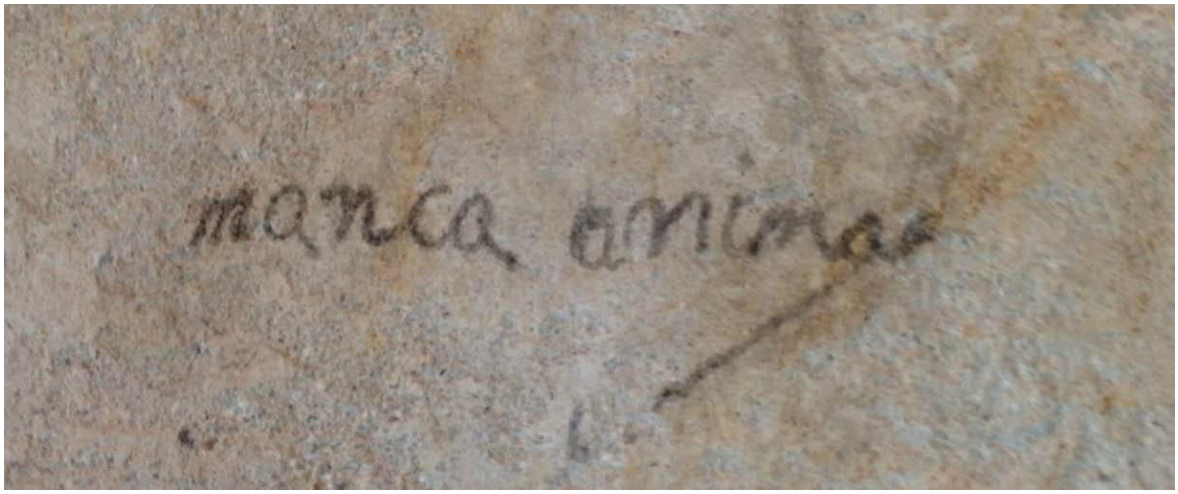

Fig. 2 *Manca Anima*, Secret Prisons of the Inquisition, Palazzo Chiaramonte, Palermo.
Photo: Courtesy of Luciano Rizzuti

Fig. 3 Giuseppe Pitrè scraps the prison wall, 1906.
Photo: Courtesy of Museo Pitrè, Palermo

Fig. 4 *Francesco Carafa kneeling*, Secret Prisons of the Inquisition, Palazzo Chiaramonte, Palermo. Comparison between a photograph by Pitrè and the state after the restoration in 2007.
Photos: Courtesy of Museo Pitrè, Palermo and courtesy of Luciano Rizzuti

Reflections on Historical Graffiti and Some Examples from Aragon

Juan Carlos Lozano López

My research and contribution to the *Graffiti Art in Prison* (GAP) project is focused on the historical graffiti preserved in Aragon in Spain, a vast region with a long history linked to the kingdom and crown of the same name. A political entity that emerged in the early 11th century and reached a great projection throughout the Mediterranean for several centuries.

Considering the very nature of the object of study, graffiti, in which there is often an overlapping and accumulation of strokes and motifs, the chronological scope we are working on ranges from the Middle Ages to the present day. Regarding the spatial and conceptual delimitation, my study deals particularly with the historical graffiti located in spaces associated with the privation of liberty understood in a broad sense: from the most obvious, such as places where people are as a consequence of a court sentence (jails, prisons, dungeons, reformatories), to other that exist for sanitary reasons (hospitals, 'madhouses' or asylums), or social shelter (hospices, orphanages), which obey a more or less voluntary decision of isolation or spiritual retreat (hermitages, monastic and convent spaces) or even to work places that imply a certain degree of prolonged solitude (as is the case of bell ringers, lighthouse keepers, millers). There are also mixed and circumstantial cases, such as those associated with the militia (military installations) or those resulting from armed conflicts (shelters, concentration camps).

In my research I have focused mainly on the Aljafería Palace in Zaragoza, an exceptional monumental complex that was the seat of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition between 1486 and 1706. Many graffiti have been left there as testimony to this fact. My analysis aims to establish relationships and connections with examples in other locations in order to draw conclusions, as well as to formulate hypotheses and work methodologies with a broader validity that allow us to advance in the knowledge of this unique cultural and heritage asset. For this purpose, I have adopted the

methodology used by Michael Camille[1] for the study of other 'marginal' texts, combining psychoanalysis, semiotics, sociology, anthropology and art history, from the positions that have been developed in recent decades based on the studies of image theory and visual culture.

The Aljafería Palace

As we see it today, the Aljafería is the result of a long history and the overlay of several building phases that correspond to three main moments.[2]

First, the early Muslim palace, built during the second half of the 11th century by Ahmad Ibn Sulayman, nicknamed *al-Muqtadir bi-llah* (the Mighty by the Grace of God), king of the *taifa* of Saraqusta (Arabic name of the city of Zaragoza) between 1046 and 1081/1082, although there are remains from the 9th century. Conceived as *Dar Asarur* (house of rejoicing, place of pleasure), it was originally a fortified palace (*alcázar*) with a square plan and perfectly aligned with the cardinal points, following Umayyad and North African models. It was located outside the walls and on flat land, between irrigation ditches and orchards, very close to the Ebro river. The most illustrious poets, philosophers, astronomers and writers of the time met in its gardens, including the famous Avempace.

Important refurbishments and extensions during the medieval period turned it into a Christian fortress and royal site of the Aragonese monarchs after the reconquest of the city of Zaragoza in 1118. The most important works were executed in the second half of the 14th century, under the reign of Pedro IV.

The third medieval transformation, when the palace was still the place of residence and representation of the monarchy, was carried out during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, between 1488 and 1493. At that time, the donjon, which had served as a royal prison, was transformed into an inquisitorial prison when the Holy Office Tribunal was established there in 1486.

The complex has undergone other important refurbishment and subsequent changes that we cannot discuss here in depth. Thus, under the reign of Philip II, in the late 16th

[1] CAMILLE 1992. Camille understood the marginal images of manuscript codices, often also scribbled, as 'the way in which this whole world pretends to evade meaning, as if it celebrated not «being» but rather the flow of «becoming»'.

[2] EXPÓSITO SEBASTIÁN, PANO GRACIA, SEPÚLVEDA SAURAS 1999.

century, its structure was adapted to become a fortress, following a project by the Sienese engineer Tiburzio Spannocchi. From this time until well into the 20th century, the palace definitively shed its representative and political function in favour of a military character, although it continued to be a place of imprisonment.

A robust and sober rectangular prismatic tower stands out from the palace complex (fig. 1). It is mentioned in the documents as 'mayor' (greater), 'maestra' (master) or 'del homenaje' (of homage) tower. On the outside it looks like a massive block, and inside it is arranged into five floors. The first three are of Muslim origin (11th century, with a first stage from the 9th century) and the other two date from the Christian medieval period (14th century). Popularly known as the 'Troubadour's tower' because it was the setting for a local legend starring the troubadour Manrique de Lara, is said to have been imprisoned in it. This legend eventually inspired Antonio García Gutiérrez to write the romantic drama *El Trovador* (1836), a passionate tale that in turn inspired the libretto of Giuseppe Verdi's opera of the same name. The tower also attracted the attention of Miguel de Cervantes. In *Don Quixote* it says that Melisendra was imprisoned by her husband, the rogue Gaiferos in 'that tower that appears there, which is supposed to be one of the towers of the alcázar of Saragossa, now called the Aljaferia'.[3]

The first records of the tower's function as a prison date back to 1429, when it served as a royal prison. Some of its illustrious prisoners were Don Carlos, Prince of Viana, after the failed rebellion against his father Juan II, and those accused of the attack on the inquisitor Pedro Arbués, committed in La Seo Cathedral of Zaragoza on September 17, 1485, that cost him his life. As an immediate effect of this murder, the Tribunal of the Holy Office was settled here as early as 1486.

The Austrian humanist, geographer and traveler Hieronymus Münzer, in his visit to Zaragoza on February 2, 1495, already testified that the building 'served as a prison for many converts of both sexes who were to be burned the following day'.[4] And, indeed, recent research on the inquisitorial processes of Judeo-Converso attest to their torture and confinement within its walls.[5] In 1546, the Portuguese traveler Gaspar Barreiros also wrote that 'the Holy Office of the Inquisition, with all its officers and prison' was located

[3] CERVANTES SAAVEDRA 1615, chap. XXVI.
[4] GARCÍA MERCADAL 1952–1962, vol. I, p. 413.
[5] SÁNCHEZ LÓPEZ 2019.

in the palace.[6] Seventy years later, in 1616, the Franciscan writer Fray Diego Murillo tells us that until the expulsion of the Moriscos (1609) the execution of sentences in 'autos de fe' took place within the walls, in the Plaza del Mercado, and from that moment on they were held in the so-called 'second courtyard' of the Aljafería.[7] Another testimony of great interest to the uses and condition of the palace is the one provided in the chronicle by Cosimo III de Medici in 1668 after his visit to Zaragoza: 'This palace belongs to the King, and it is certain that since he is in Zaragoza, he has lived in the Archbishop's palace'. Therefore, at that time it was no longer used as a place of residence for the monarch and, in fact, he points out that the main tower 'serves today as a prison for the prisoners of the Inquisition [...] just as the rest of the building serves as a very comfortable dwelling for the three inquisitors, the prosecutor and the other ministers of that tribunal'.[8] The Florentine traveler describes the rooms in detail: the courtroom, covered in red damask, and the three chairs for the members of the tribunal under a black velvet canopy trimmed with gold. In front of them there was a large table presided over by a silver cross for the oaths to be taken. It also documents that hearings in cases of heresy and other moral offenses took place in the major or upper chamber.

The year after Cosimo de Medici's visit, in 1669, the Frenchman Juan Herauld, Lord of Gourville, visited Zaragoza and spoke of 'the palace of the Inquisition [...] the ordinary residence of Justice to punish those who speak against religion, and there they burn those who are convicted of heresy'.[9] In 1784 the Marquis de Langle is much more scathing when speaking of the building: 'there is where they send the incubi, succubi, soothsayers, Jews, Quakers, sorcerers and witches. The archbishop of Saragossa is the supreme leader, forty to fifty Jacobins are the jailers of this den, of which nothing is known, from which few people manage to leave, and that is protected by three or four drawbridges, moats, bastions, bolts, lay brothers and doges'.[10] It should be noted that, at that time, the building had long since ceased to be the seat of the Tribunal, although its black legend was still very much alive at the grass-roots level, and so far removed from the playful and pleasurable purpose with which this palace was conceived.

[6] GARCÍA MERCADAL 1952–1962, vol. 1, p. 1010.
[7] MURILLO 1616, treatise 2, chap. 22, pp. 182–184.
[8] MAGALOTTI 1933, pp. 50–71.
[9] GARCÍA MERCADAL 1952–1962, vol. II, p. 760.
[10] Ibid., vol. III, p. XXX.

The presence of the Tribunal in the Aljafería was not limited to the use of the tower, as there is documentary evidence of other rooms being used by the inquisitors and their officials, specifically the buildings surrounding the courtyard of San Martín, as shown in a plan dated 1612 (fig. 2).

In 1706 the building was vacated to be used as barracks during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1713), and the Tribunal was moved to other buildings in the historic city centre. However, the castle-palace and its main tower continued to be used as a prison in the 19th century, both during the War of Independence and the Carlist Wars. This long use has left a testimony of abundant graffiti that accumulate and overlap with the previous ones on its walls.

The Preserved Graffiti

The visible graffiti that have lasted to our days, an incalculable part of the existing ones, hidden or already destroyed, are mainly found in the donjon.[11] Most of them have been produced by incisión or chopping; less of them have been executed with some kind of pigment, and there are almost no smoked ones. They are grouped in twenty-two sets arranged in free-standing fragments or on the side walls, lintels, ceilings and window sills or benches and window nooks: five on the second floor, seven on the third, six on the fourth and four on the fifth (fig. 3).

It is difficult to establish the original compartmentalization of these spaces that are now open except for the supporting pillars, but we must imagine small and dreary cells, with barred or even blinded windows, where living conditions should have been so harsh that the interrogations and tortures led the prisoners to suicide. There are several documented cases of prisoners who threw themselves from the battlements, hanged themselves from a nail, or died after swallowing shards from the lamps. It should also be noted that some rooms in the tower were occupied by the jailers or used for interrogation and torture, as is the case of the ones on the ground floor.

[11] The article by Carmen Fernández Cuervo provided a first approach to the study of the graffiti in the Aljafería, later completed with the results of the archaeological excavations carried out during the restoration of the building, see FERNÁNDEZ CUERVO 1967, pp. 221-228 and MARTÍN BUENO, SÁENZ PRECIADO 1998. More recently, there have been other specific contributions by Alejandro Martín López, see MARTÍN LÓPEZ, JAMBRINA ALONSO 2015 and MARTÍN LÓPEZ 2018. However, a detailed and in-depth study has yet to be carried out.

Besides the tower, the only space in the Aljafería where graffiti have been found so far is the *Salón del Trono* or *Salón de Santa Isabel* (Throne Hall or Santa Isabel Hall) of the Palace of the Catholic Monarchs, where two panels have been preserved. One of them shows what has been interpreted as a sea battle. Initially, the name given to this exceptional space does not suggest it was used as a place for imprisonment, but we know from documentation and, specially, thanks to an important graphic testimony, that a prison hospital was located there during the first Carlist war (1833-1840). It is a lithograph by Jenaro Pérez Villaamil showing the presence of large inscriptions on the walls, proving that many other graffiti have disappeared.

My Sun / One and the Same Sun

Among the many graffiti preserved in the Aljafería, we find one particularly interesting –although not very visible– located in the mouth of a window on the fourth floor of the donjon, which reads: 'HA ENTRADO / EL SOL AQUI / Y ES MI SOL' ('THE SUN HAS COME HERE AND IT IS MY SUN') (fig. 4). The sentence is surrounded by a series of long parallel lines that seem to indicate, if we consider the proximity of the window opening, the range of sunlight at different times. It is difficult to determine the chronology of this inscription, but in any case its interest lies not so much in the astronomical observation it reveals, but in the fact that its author, in addition to the appropriation of the wall that all graffiti implies, also felt himself the owner of the sun that entered his cell. This idea has an extreme poetic force and sensitivity, especially if we consider the bleak context where it is produced.

In the basement of the Episcopal palace of Tarazona (Zaragoza) there are several rooms that were used as dungeons. In the upper left corner of one of the walls, near a window, we find the figurative representation of a sun with human features.[12] The circumference and the rays are incised, but the inner lines have been made with charcoal. There is no text associated to it, but some nearby inscriptions on the same wall date from the 18th century, so the same date can also be applied to this graffiti of imprecise meaning.

Finally, in the monastery of Veruela (Zaragoza) the following incised text was found on one of the columns of the arcade that leads from the cloister to the chapter house in the summer of 2017: 'EXPEDICIÓN / A MONCAYO / EN EL ECLIPSE / DE 1860 / MA / OM

[12] GARCÍA SERRANO 2012, pp. 69–71, 159 and footnote 37. GARCÍA SERRANO 2019.

/ PM / G / A / JM / CB / RB / JV / OO / JV / J / JK' ('EXPEDITION / TO MONCAYO / IN THE ECLIPSE / OF 1860 / MA / OM / PM / G / A / JM / CB / CB / RB / JV / OO / JV / JV / J / JK'). The inscription refers to the international scientific expedition arranged to observe the total eclipse scheduled for 18 July 1860.[13] It so happens that, a few years earlier, a reused ashlar stone had been found in one of the wide arches of the Town Hall Square of Sos del Rey Católico (Zaragoza). It had an inscription in Latin: '*Anno domini M CCC : L : IIII XVII die septembris : hora prima obscura uit sol' ('*At the first hour of September 17, in the year of our Lord 1354, the sun darkened').

These examples, located in distant and unrelated places, like other case studies that we approached during the GAP Project (Steri Palace in Palermo, Narni, etc.) have the sun as their protagonist, the same sun that Ferdinando Oreste Nannetti (NOF4) mentioned on several occasions in his hallucinatory writings on the exterior walls of the asylum in Volterra (Italy) in the 1960s.[14] It is also the same sun referred to in the epitaph placed in 2009 on the grave of the scholar and explorer Engelbert Kaempfer (Lemgo, 1651–Lieme, 1716), doctor of medicine, author of an important work on Japan at the time, *The History of Japan*: 'All human beings see one and the same sun, we all tread one and the same earth, we all breathe one and the same air, no boundary of nature, no law of the Creator separates us from one another'.[15] An epitaph of great depth that has made us reflect on the connections that unite human beings across spatial and temporal dimensions and allow us to relate the local and the global, and to analyze the *continuum* of certain universal concepts and forms of expression.

Survival Strategies in Borderline Life

The study, analysis and correct interpretation of the graffiti made by people who lived in any of those 'survival spaces'[16] in what we could also qualify as 'borderline life', poses an initial methodological problem for the researcher, due to the difficulty –or rather the impossibility– of establishing a certain empathetic approach to extreme situations to with which they can rarely relate. Most of the authors of the graffiti are human beings whose particulars are unknown to us. We only have the few traces or isolated evidence

[13] NOVELLA 1860.
[14] PEIRY 2011.
[15] This text is included in the unpublished doctoral thesis of Alejandro Sanz Guillén, who translated the original text from German.
[16] CASTILLO GÓMEZ 2003, p. 165.

that have miraculously made it to us. Such traces or evidence were certainly not, in many cases, the fruit of a determined will to remain, nor is there a previous planning of the result or a particular intentionality. They can therefore be interpreted in many ways, surely all of them imperfect and, in the best of cases, approximate.

One of these possible partial interpretations has to do with the mechanisms or strategies that human beings develop to ensure their survival, 'a way of not dying, in short, of resisting the annulment and depersonalization brought about by incarceration',[17] and also to preserve hope, sanity and dignity in critical moments when it is needed, either consciously or unconsciously, by rational means or by resorting to the supernatural. Among these mechanisms or strategies we can find, for example, self-affirmation and the safeguarding of identity, but also of provenance and origins, evidenced by the names of people and places, as well as hand and footprints, one of the oldest and simplest forms of human expression. Other examples are the manifestation of hobbies, ideas and beliefs, explicitly or through symbols (such as the recurrent crosses), the preservation of memory and remembrance using very diverse texts or images of an evocative nature (buildings, objects, portraits and figures), the –relative– awareness of the passage of time and of reality expressed by counting the days ('prisoner's accounts') or by the empirical and domestic astronomical observations based on the movement of the stars, as we have already seen, the recording of meteorological phenomena (storms, snowfalls, floods). There is also the need to remain in the world through the recording of historical and intra-historical events or happenings (battles, soldiers); the will to ease boredom, routine and loneliness, resorting to play (as shown by chess, alquerque or other board games) or through repetitive and automated strokes (such as the very widespread ornamental motifs of circular rosettes made with string or compass, or the geometric ones); turning to the supernatural, through invocations to the divine, seeking atonement for guilt, but also exorcisms and incantations to the Evil One;[18] the yearning for freedom, manifested in the recurrent presence of boats or natural elements (animals and plants); and the escape into imaginative or dreamlike fictional territories, including those of an erotic and sexual nature.

[17] Ibid., p. 162.
[18] GARCÍA SERRANO, GARCÍA CHUECA 2020–2021.

Breaking Through the Wall and/or Making a Home

All of these strokes belonged to individuals on the margins of society and separated from it. People with behaviours considered as anomic that interfere with the proper functioning of the social mechanism by deviating or dissociating themselves from the norm, and are therefore secluded or eliminated. Once confined, the prison walls become the physical limit of subsistence, but also offer other possibilities, depending on the degree of resistance, acceptance or adaptation to their new life circumstances. One of these options may be the transgressive desire to have an impact on the wall –always interpreted as a metaphor for power, social control and limited freedom– in order to, in a certain way, break through it, make it vulnerable or even destroy it, even figuratively, using a non-canonical form of expression.[19] Another option, opposed to the previous one but not exclusive, could be trying to turn the confinement space into a home, appropriating different kinds of walls by representing objects, concepts and evocations they feel close and friendly, as we humans usually do in a real way when decorating our homes. These representations, far from being incidental or arbitrary, are of the utmost importance for the prisoner in places where the identity of being and temporal perception are dematerialized into a 'passing of time and events', a survival to boredom, limitation of movement and control.

Palimpsest *versus* Collective Work

One graffiti calls for another graffiti. Walls that have been painted or engraved have a special appeal and often get new marks and incisions. In the spaces where people are deprived of their liberty, this phenomenon occurs in a compulsory way, so that the accumulation of strokes by different individuals on the same supports, at the same or at different times, ends up forming a tangled and confusing superposition of lines. Even performing a detailed topographic/stratigraphic study such as the one used in archaeological methodology, or applying modern techniques of 3D scanning, photogrammetry and hyperspectral imaging, it is very difficult to individualize the graffiti, and even more difficult to establish a time sequence in their execution.

Occupying the same space over time usually results in a kind of collective and multi-temporal works where the new graffiti, rather than overlapping the previous ones and

[19] GIMENO BLAY 1997.

hiding them, like a palimpsest, interact with them and can even emphasize, censor, alter or re-signify them. For this reason, it is complicated, and perhaps even risky, to individualize them, since only the first inhabitant who drew on the wall acted free of conditioning factors. The rest of them started from something that already existed and may even have felt encouraged to write or draw because others had already done so in the same place. The result combines the synchronic vision of what was produced at each moment and the diachronic one that forms a kind of collective identity, 'in terms of chronicles, of a chorus of voices, of dialogue with those who came before and after in the cell'.[20] This is an approach that confronts us with one of the main problems in art historiography and that has to do with the different timing of images, the 'heterochrony', to use Keith Moxey's expression.[21]

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[20] FIUME, GARCÍA-ARENAL 2018, p. 8.
[21] MOXEY 2013.

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Fig. 1 General exterior view of the Aljafería Palace with its 'torre del Homenaje' (donjon). Photo: Juan Carlos Lozano López

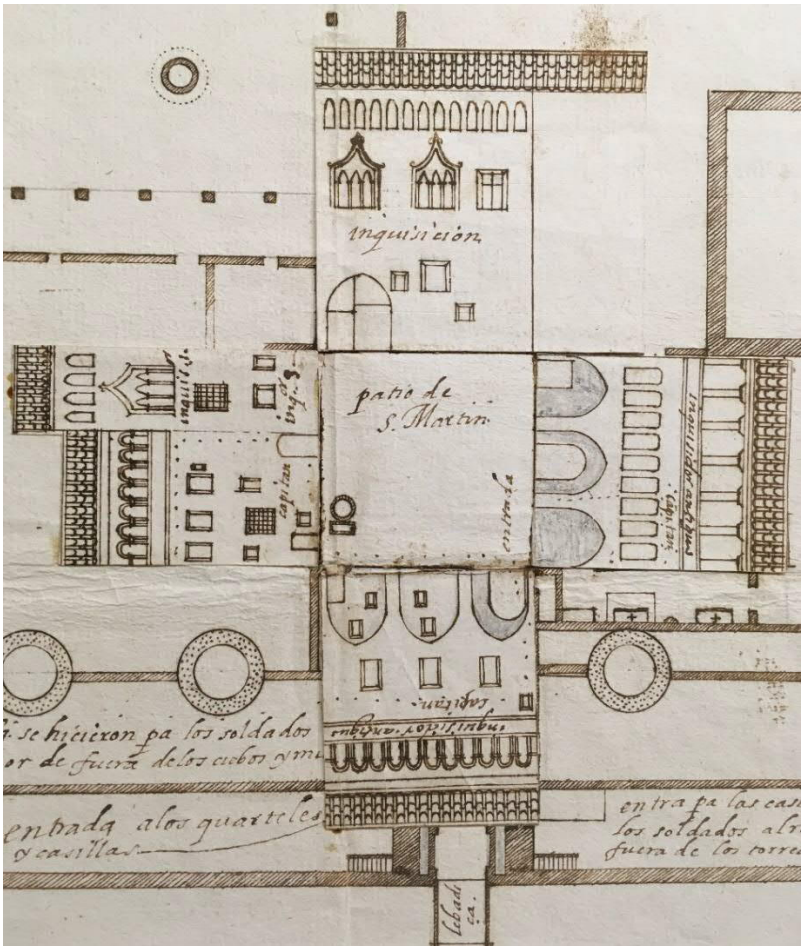

Fig. 2 Unknown author, plan of the Aljafería (detail), 1612.
Archive of the Diputación Provincial de Zaragoza

Fig. 3 Window with graffiti in the donjon of the Aljafería.
Photo: Juan Carlos Lozano López

Fig. 4 Graffiti alluding to the sun on a window on the fourth floor of the donjon of the Aljafería.
Photo: Juan Carlos Lozano López

Can the Subaltern Write? Temporary Subalternity in the Prison of Narni

Anna Clara Basilicò

In 1976 Carlo Ginzburg published the first edition of *The cheese and the worms. The cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller*. This milestone of microhistory pieced together the life of Domenico Scandella – also known as Menocchio –, a miller tried twice for heresy by the Inquisition in Friuli. The work of Ginzburg was demonstrative of a profound turn in the approach to subalternity and it has exerted a great influence on historiography ever since.[1] The French historian Roger Chartier, commenting on the *The cheese and the worms*, stated that it was 'entirely permissible to explore, as through magnifying glass, the way a man of the people can think and use the sparse intellectual elements that reach him from literature culture'.[2] But was it? Such statement, for instance, collides with the development of subaltern studies from the 1980s onwards and, in particular, with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak formulation of subalternity.[3] In 1988 she published an essay destined to become a watershed for subaltern studies. The paper was significantly entitled *Can the subaltern speak?* and through the story of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, a young woman who hanged herself in Calcutta in 1926, the philosopher proved to what extent the historical circumstances and the ideological structures collude to remove any chance for the subaltern to be heard. She concluded the essay stating that 'the subaltern cannot speak'.[4] This argument was then softened and Spivak mitigated her position. 'I said in a very violent and enraged rhetorical voice 'the subaltern cannot speak' – she admitted in 2014 – but that is not to be taken as an

[1] Microhistory, as currently intended, took shape during the late 1970s in Italy. The journal *Quaderni storici* and the series *Microstorie* published by Einaudi and curated by Simona Cerutti, Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi hosted the debate and the research on this historiographical paradigm, which has become one of the most significant sites of epistemological debate among historians. See also LEVI 1991; GINZBURG 1993; GINZBURG 2013; TRIVELLATO 2011.

[2] CHARTIER 1982, p. 35.

[3] To Spivak, the subaltern is a female-gendered noun, and it is a subject that has been 'removed from lines of social mobility' (SPIVAK 2004, p. 531), situated in a 'position without identity' where 'social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognizable basis of action' (SPIVAK 2005, p. 476). The subalterns do not have consciousness of their condition – from which the philosopher derives the difference between subalternity and class – and occupy a place excluded from representation in both political and aesthetic senses, being thus a non-agent and a non-subject.

[4] SPIVAK 1988, pp. 307–8.

expository sentence'.[5] The shift was crucial, since it allowed the scholar to solve the aporia of the 'epistemological availability of subalternity' that her formulation determined until then.[6] Even so, Spivak's definition of subalternity partially conflicts with Ginzburg's assumption of Domenico Scandella as a subaltern and, as a matter of fact, Ginzburg's approach follows from the notion of subalternity as described by Gramsci,[7] not referring to the debate generated around post-coloniality in social sciences. It is in virtue of this perspective that a man as Menocchio was intended as subaltern. Assuming marginalization according to Spivak's criterions, it would appear that Menocchio's position was not *so* marginal,[8] even though he describes himself as a 'poor man'.[9] Menocchio's condition as a free man will not be debated here, instead the problem will be addressed from a perspective that might conciliate both Ginzburg's and Spivak's conclusions, assuming imprisonment as the ultimate cause of his subalternity, since once incarcerated, he lost any possibility to participate in any space of autonomy.

This argument is crucial when addressing early modern carceral exposed writings. The issue that engages the scholar in face of prison graffiti is whether one can consider them as a form of subaltern writing, hence written by subalterns. But to answer this question requires answering another: can the subaltern write? Based on the evidence and on the history of literacy, the answer is no. The subaltern cannot write. Women, marginal subaltern classes, racialized prisoners were structurally excluded by this practice. 'The world of illiterate people in a written culture' is a huge, blurred field, difficult to deal with and to study.[10] But what one needs to consider here is not the actual ability to write, but the agency behind the graphic act.[11] It is to this regard that an apparently contradiction in terms, such as the concept of *temporary subalternity*, can be conceived.

A rather fitting case in this regard is the prison of Narni, a small village in Umbria, where in 1979 a group of boys accidentally found the headquarter of the Holy Office dismissed in the

[5] SPIVAK 2014, p. 11.
[6] WARRIOR 2011, p. 86.
[7] His formulation evolved in time, but Gramsci eventually recurred to the term *subaltern* as an adjective referred to *classes* (always plural): it was thus coined in opposition to the ruling class, the hegemonic one, and comprehended all the social classes that endured the ruling class's initiative trying to defend themselves. To Gramsci, the subaltern classes had to strive to achieve unity and organization on order to overcome the ruling class and overturn its hegemony. See, in particular, GRAMSCI 2007 Q 3, 48; Q 8, 169; 205; Q 11, 12.
[8] He had been mayor of the village and administrator of the parish church, he could 'read, write, and add', having supposedly attended elementary school (GINZBURG 1992, p. 2).
[9] Ibid., p. 16.
[10] PETRUCCI 1978, p. 464.
[11] CASTILLO GÓMEZ 2022, p. 158.

19th century and forgotten since then (fig. 1).[12] The town had been part of the Papal State from the Middle Ages until 1798, when it passed for a brief interlude to the Roman Republic. In 1809 it was annexed to the French Empire and in 1859–60 it eventually passed to the Kingdom of Italy. The Holy Office established here its court probably in 1653, but the cells discovered in the 1970s were built only in 1714–15. Until then, in fact, prisoners were incarcerated in the fortress of Albornoz, while the inquisitorial headquarter was at the Convent of Santa Maria Maggiore, two kilometers away from the citadel. Since it was not uncommon for prisoners to escape on the way to interrogation,[13] the Narni inquisitors obtained permission to erect next to the convent the new prison facility, which eventually counted three cells, two audience chambers (one for men and one for women), and a torture room.[14] Among the surviving rooms, one of the cells that Roberto Nini and the other boys discovered in the 1970s was covered by graffiti, most of which attributable to a single prisoner, Giuseppe Andrea Lombardini (fig. 2). Incarcerated in December 1759, he was released two months later.[15] Lombardini was a guard of the Inquisition of Spoleto, not far away from Narni, who helped a colleague, Pietro Milli, escape from prison. They were caught in the act and charged by the Holy Office. While incarcerated, Lombardini covered the walls of his cell with words and sketches – mistakenly described as masonic or esoteric symbols[16] –, proving that he *could* write. But his ability to write was the result of his previous condition of non-subaltern subject and his ability to write is one of the traces of his former position that one can retrieve, the most evident being the favorable treatment by the court. After only two months in prison, he was sentenced to exile from the town he had served, Spoleto. But it is not only the brevity of his imprisonment that demonstrates the court's benevolent treatment: both Lombardini and Milli, as soon as they forwarded requests for pardon, were granted it.[17] The Umbrian court has not yet been thoroughly studied, and this, together with the dispersion of archival documents,[18] makes research difficult. The few surviving trials do not yet allow conclusions

[12] The story of the discovery of these prisons is collected in NINI 2016. The author was one of the young boys who discovered the court in 1979.
[13] Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede (ACDF), *Sanctum Officium*, St. St. FF 5 g, ff. 17r–18r.
[14] ACDF, *Sanctum Officium*, St. St. FF 5 c, 1700/1782.
[15] ACDF, *Sanctum Officium*, *Decreta 1760*, ff. 28r – 28v.
[16] This belief does not stem from an actual survey of graffiti, but rather from a suggestion, which, however, finds wide circulation among a non-specialist audience. In particular, see the text by Valerio Ivo Montanaro published on the prisons' website <https://www.narnisotterranea.it/2017/05/12/approfondiamo-i-graffiti/>, accessed 20 June 2023.
[17] ACDF, Sanctum Officium, Decreta 1763, f. 214r.
[18] See DONATO 2019.

to be drawn in this regard, but it is striking, for example, that names associated with figures of 'marginal subalterns' – to use a Gramscian category – do not appear on these walls, nor are there any writings traceable to them.[19]

Evidence suggests thus that *some* subalterns can write: those subalterns who did not experience subalternity outside prison, whose writing acts are displayed as acts of a hitherto non-subaltern subject. Discussing prison writings in these terms might seem pleonastic, yet it will not be useless to remind the historian, as well as the visitor, who approaches them that, along with the authors of the graffiti, those cells were hosting people who could not entrust the walls with any verbal message. But then, as Maartje van Gelder and Filippo de Vivo put it, 'if the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, then what is it evidence of?'.[20] Of the inadequacy of hegemonic languages to describe other realities, would argue Spivak, to turn the subaltern from the *object* of research to a *subject* to learn from. acknowledging that until now the latter 'stems from capital and power', while 'the objects are the barbarians, the people, and the women excluded from power',[21] I would add. It is crucial not to set aside prison graffiti, nor to consider their authors as *not-enough-subaltern*, but to combine these readings with the stories of the thousands of illiterates that endured the same detention, embracing Spivak's invitation to deconstruct historiography. It is not an easy task, but, as Spivak puts it, the ability 'to question the authority of the investigating subject without paralyzing him, persistently transforming conditions of impossibility into possibility' is 'the greatest gift'[22] for a scholar. And a responsibility we must take on.

* This text is an excerpt of part of the author's doctoral dissertation. The title is inspired by Spivak's essay on subalternity entitled *Can the subaltern speak?* (SPIVAK 1988).

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[20] VAN GELDER, DE VIVO 2023, p. 45.
[21] ÖCALAN 2020, p. 19.
[22] SPIVAK 2006, p. 201.

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Fig. 1 Graffiti on the walls, Former prison of the Holy Office, Narni. On the right side the signature of Andrea Giuseppe Lombardini. Photo: www.turismonarni.it

Fig. 2 Graffiti on the walls, Former prison of the Holy Office, Narni, (detail). Photo: Anna Clara Basilicò

Historical Graffiti in Aragon: Source of Documentation

Belén Buil Pallás

In Aragon, by the end of the fifteenth century, the papal tribunal, which had been in operation since the beginning of the 13th century, was already established in the territory. It had been created due to the growing expansion of the Albigensian heresy and fear in Aragonese territory of the expansion of this religious current led to the institution of the Office of Inquisition. Despite the prolonged existence of this medieval inquisition, its use declined over time, leading to the establishment of the so-called new inquisition as an almost *ex novo* action. The tribunal was founded in Zaragoza in 1482, however, it was not until 1483, with the appointment of Friar Tomás de Torquemada as inquisitor general of the territories belonging to the Crown of Aragon, that the Holy Office was officially established in this territory.[1] The settlement of the Court of the Holy Office in Aragon was supported by the Spanish monarchy and the king of Aragon Ferdinand unified the inquisitorial seats in a single court housed in the Aljafería Palace (Zaragoza).[2] One of the points for the Spanish Inquisition was the importance of territorial control. In order to achieve this goal a network of relatives and commissioners of the various tribunals was established creating the so-called districts.[3] In this way the Holy Office obtained a geographical homogeneity. The inquisitorial presence throughout Aragon led to the creation of different centers such as tribunal headquarters, prisons, places of execution and related heritage.[4] After the fall of the Holy Tribunal, these numerous buildings such as palaces, houses or town halls, in the case of smaller towns, gradually disappeared.

Successive restorations or rehabilitations of these buildings considered that this type of manifestations was not worthy of being preserved, facilitating the destruction of many of them. To a certain extent, this uncomfortable heritage falls into oblivion: it is considered a part of Spain's history but it remains difficult to confront with, because of its conflictive nature. In spite of this, and as the scholars Ascensión Hernández and Juan Carlos Lozano say, 'It is a conflictive heritage that can contain unique values such as historical, social and identity

[1] ALCALÁ GALVE 1984; GARI LACRUZ 2007; JIMENEZ MONTESERIN, MIGUEL 2021.
[2] NOUGUÉS SECALL, MARIANO 2020; SOBRADIEL VALENZUELA, 2023.
[3] PASAMAN LAZARO 1999.
[4] UBIETO ARTETA 1959, p. 549.

values, and even in certain cases architectural values'.[5]

One of the few manifestations related to the Holy Office in Aragon is the presence of the historical graffiti on the walls of the former inquisitorial prisons. This irreplaceable information reflects the need of the prisoners to record events, occurrences or rituals and it has to be considered as an important documentation that permit to better understand the complexity of the past society. In general, these graffiti follow several similar patterns or drawings: birds as a symbol of freedom, weapons such as swords, knives or guns and sacred representations, as well as a multitude of female representations. It is not unusual to find also entire scenes, architectures or lost places as snapshots of the past. A confirmation of its value can be found in the numerous case studies emerged across the Aragonese territory. One example above all is the research carried out by José Ángel García Serrano on the graffiti located in the Episcopal Palace of Tarazona.[6] The main problem with this type of heritage is its conservation. Since it has never been approached as a relevant historical record or as a direct testimony, it has been as been allowed to fall into disrepair. Ideally, the law on Aragonese Cultural Heritage (Law 3/1999, of 10 March), was enacted in order to protect heritage in this specific autonomous community and it, should offer protection to this type of documentation to avoid its systematic destruction.

Considering what has been described above, this article wants to shed light on two examples: the townhall in Castejon de Monegros and the sacristy in the church of San Martín de Tours in Crivillén. The purpose of this analyses is to reevaluate the importance of small localities in Spanish Autonomous Communities y and how the Holy Office affected the Aragon territory. Castejón de Monegros is a town located in the Los Monegros region, halfway between the provinces of Huesca and Zaragoza. It has a population of around 500 inhabitants and a rich historical past. The current Town Hall was originally a palace with typical architectural characteristics of the Aragonese Renaissance palaces, based on the Italian Renaissance with Gothic and Mudejar influences. In 1606 it was used as a prison of the Holy Office and at the beginning of the 21st century, in occasion of restoration works, a series of graffiti were recovered in what used to be the old dungeon. It is relevant to specify that the presence of the Spanish Inquisition in this region is well documented and that Castejon de Monegros was considered an important inquisitorial headquarter.[7] In the ancient room where the prison was

[5] HERNÁNDEZ MARTÍNEZ, LOZANO LÓPEZ 2019, pp. 513–517.
[6] GARCÍA SERRANO 2019.
[7] In the church of Nuestra Señora de la Lumbre there are reminders of the presence of the Holy Office in the

located, there is a series of graffiti with religious and military motifs. One of the most outstanding examples is the representation of a castle or fortress that resembles the actual castle located in the upper part of the village (fig. 1). The interest in this graffiti lies in the fact that it shows a part of the fortress that is no longer preserved and it is the only image of this construction in its maximum splendor. In fact, all the surviving documentation of the castle disappeared during the Spanish Civil War. In the graffiti, in the lower left corner, monks are shown in procession towards a promontory near the castle. There are three crosses on the promontory, which can be interpreted as a representation of the Calvary: the hill next to the castle is known as the Calvary Hill and documents confirm that once the Easter procession of Calvary was held there.

Another example that allows us to argue for the importance of historical graffiti as a documentary source is the case of the small town Crivillén, in the province of Teruel, Aragon. Inside the main church dedicated to Saint Martin of Tours there is a room used as the sacristy. On the walls there are numerous graffiti, including the representation of some dancers who seem to clash their swords or sticks and who are all dressed in similar costumes (fig. 2). These dances are traditional performances which were practiced in various villages of Aragon. Generally, they are performed in honour of the local saint, and they function as an allegory of the struggle between Good and Evil and in some cases can also be interpreted as the conflict between Christians and Muslims. Those dances were also theatrical performances and the participants accompanied the movements with a dialogue within them. As part of my research on the graffiti in Crivillén I found by chance an historical document of the 18th century giving evidence of how those dances were speaking performances. In the first line the words *quinto danzante* (fifth dancer) prove that the following prayer written in verse was a part of the dialogue used by the dancers. The graffiti representation together with this document attests the existence of this type of performance in Crivillén, of which there was no record, since these dances were often lost at the beginning of the 20th century.

On 15 July 1834, the decree definitively abolishing the Holy Office in Spain was published. Many of these infrastructures were used for other functions or simply destroyed. A heritage that became unknown and forgotten because it was considered part of an uncomfortable past.

execution room, which today houses the cauldron. As well as the fresco of Santo Domingo de Guzmán, founder of the Dominicans.

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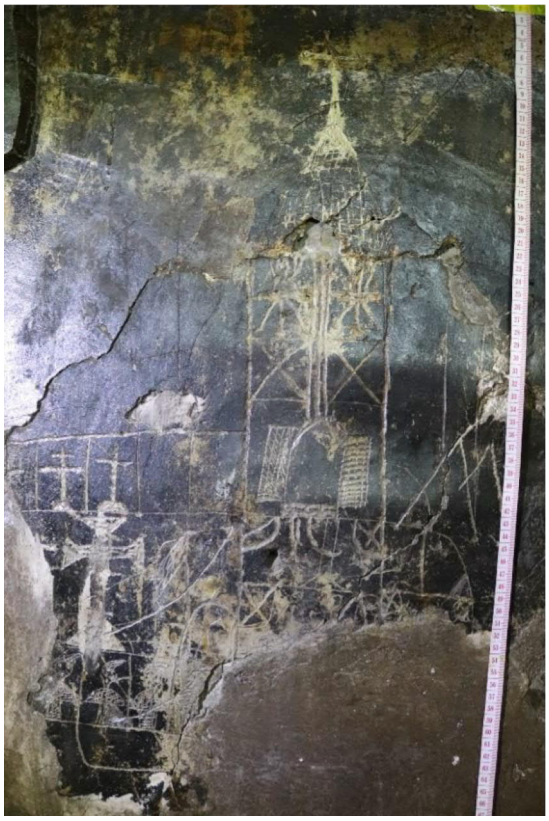

Fig. 1 Graffiti representing a castle, Town Hall, Castejón de Monegros.
Photo: Belén Buil Pallás

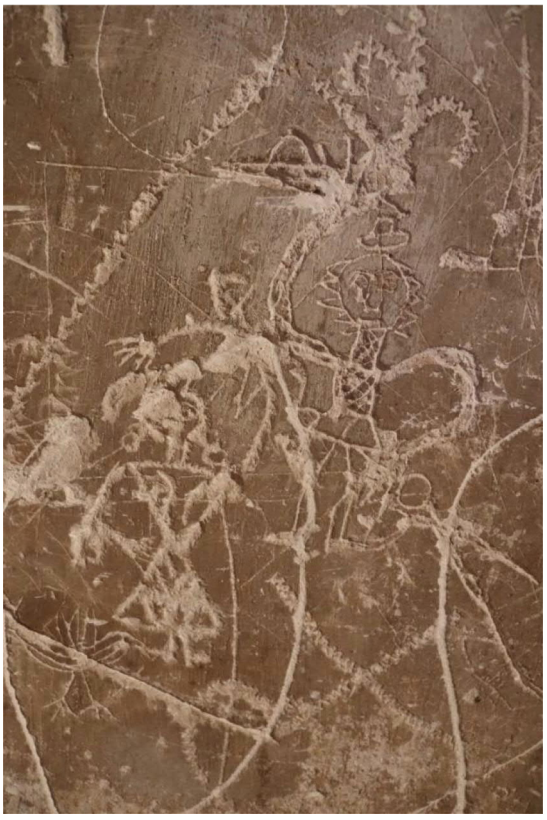

Fig. 2 Graffiti representing a traditional dance, Sacresty, Church St. Martin of Tours, Crivellén.
Photo: Belén Buil Pallás

Erotic Ritual Symbols in the Secret Prisons of the Steri in Palermo

Pier L. J. Mannella

The graffiti, writings and drawings that cover the walls of the cells of the secret prisons of the Spanish Inquisition this article deals with are placed in the building behind the Steri in Palermo. They constitute the graphic and technical-artistic translation of the feelings, passions, devotions, beliefs, and thoughts of those who left their testimony on the prison walls. They were made approximately between 1606 and 1782. Studies on these graphic manifestations have intensified in recent years, and a consistent number of scholars have commented on the writings and drawings from the secret prisons of the Holy Office in Palermo. These studies have emphasized the obscure and contradictory aspects of the graffiti with regard to its function, the identity of the prisoners who made it, and particularly the iconic and written sources that inspired it.[1] The exclusion of esoteric and necromantic implications from the exegesis of the Steri graffiti inevitably leads to doctrinal and dogmatic interpretations, particularly of sacred figures and scriptures.[2] However, some of these images should be analyzed as products and symbols of rituals performed by necromancers.[3]

Necromantic rituals were performed in the cells and on the walls of the secret prisons of the Steri in Palermo, as is mainly known from the judicial summary concerning the trial of Francesco Saya.[4]

He was accused, along with his accomplice Vincenzo Sineri, of being a member of a necromantic sect which roamed between Catania and Messina, swindling people with thesauric research.[5] After the accusation made by nine witnesses, and subsequent hearings, on January 14, 1639 it was decided for his imprisonment in the secret prisons where are still preserved the drawings and graffiti testifying the presence of necromancers. Francesco Saya and Vincenzo Sineri would remain inside this prison until their final sentence on May 23, 1640.

[1] FIUME 2021; MANNELLA 2021; LA MOTTA 2019; GARCÍA ARENAL 2018.

[2] Inquisitors, witnesses and penitents used the term *nigromantes*, *nigromancers* as a generic equivalent of demon summoners and operators of magical rituals and esoteric arts. They seem to limit it to experts of these arts who practiced high 'magic', the one contemplated and prescribed in the texts of analogical rituals and prayers and demonic catalogues. See LA MANTIA 1977.

[3] The author already dealt with this topic in MANNELLA 2021.

[4] The documents related to this trial are in Archivo Historico Nacional de Madrid (AHNM), *Inquisición, Sicilia, Relaciones de causas*, l. 902, ff. 67v.–70v. See also MANNELLA 2021, pp. 173–174.

[5] Many necromancers were interested in searching for treasures hidden underground and enchanted. See GIACOBELLO 2018.

The significant information about the ritual drawings is provided by a witness at Saya's trial. A fellow prisoner stated that the *reo* (accused) had drawn a circle to invoke demons on the wall of the cell where they were imprisoned: 'he knew how to call demons by means of a circle like the one he had made on the wall, and that he knew how to invoke demons as the witness actually heard it, although he did not see anything'.[6] This is an evocative *praxis* set forth in more detail in the trial against Sineri,[7] and contemplated in the regulative ceremonial texts.

In the grimoire studied by Aurelio Rigoli, for example, the esoteric operations to free oneself from imprisonment are prescribed by drawing on the prison wall an esoteric matrix character depicted in the manuscript and corresponding to a pentacle: a circle within which the Star of David is inscribed, the so called Salomon's node, and demonic names and necromantic symbols are drawn.[8]

Further wall writings found in the secret prisons of the Steri, can also be interpreted as magical symbols.[9] Within many examples attention must be paid to two hearts depicted in two different cells at the ground floor of the Steri secret prisons. The first heart (cell 3), has been preserved in its entirety although the stroke with which it is traced is now very faded. It is pierced by several sharp objects and in particular cutting or piercing weapons: needles, nails, pins, daggers, swords, and arrows that surround it throughout (fig. 1).

The image of the second heart (cell 1), on the other hand, is particularly ragged and depicts the human organ always associated with the feeling of love crossed transversely by an arrow and containing an illegible inscription inside (fig. 2).

These are most likely products of erotic ceremonial and the comparison with other hearts drawn in esoteric manuscript booklets and particularly in correspondence with *Ad Amorem* recipes is inevitable. In papers and ceremonial books seized from necromancers, hearts pierced by pointed weapons and/or inscribed are found and they were drawn for erotic purposes. A manuscript necromantic book[10] contains an erotic spell, titled *Ad Amore esperimento,* that is

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[6] 'Que el sabía imbocar demonios por medio de un circulo como el que había echo en la pared, y que sabía invocar los demonios como actualmente lo oya el testigo, aunque el no veia nada', in AHNM, Inquisición, Sicilia, *Relaciones de causas*, l. 902, ff. 67v.–70v., translated by the author. See also MANNELLA 2021, pp. 173–174.

[7] 'The prisoner made great spells making a circle on the wall, and on it a sign called Solomon's node, ordering the demon when he did not come to get into that node', translated by the author from AHNM, Inquisición, Sicilia, *Relaciones de causas*, l. 902, f. 72r.

[8] RIGOLI 1978, p. 46 (fig. 14).

[9] For example a circle with the inverted triangle flanking the face of the six-eyed St. John and referable to a pentacle (penitence section), the sun and moon on either side of Christ on the cross, which shift the depiction to a cosmic and astral plane (cell 3, ground floor), the psalm 62, verses 115 and 131 (cell 1, first floor) and the scriptures of Paul Maiorana, which conclude with a *nodus Salomonis* (cell 3, ground floor). On this topic see MANNELLA 2021.

[10] Archivio Storico di Venezia (ASV), Inq., case 108.

accompanied by a drawing of an arrow-pierced heart (fig. 3). In the same booklet, it is attested another love recipe, *Ad amore, ma non tanto potente come il sopradetto*, with similar ritual prescriptions followed by another inscribed heart. The Steri's parietal hearts mentioned before adhere to the same iconographic standards as those prescribed in such necromantic regulatory texts.

The rituals, despite being edified and inspired by these esoteric books, have popular origins and reproduce in writing what in the esoteric oral tradition of the Sicily is called *fattura* or *magarìa*.[11] These rites performed by *magari* and sorceresses are aimed at winning the heart of the beloved through induced compulsion by means of demons summoned for the purpose. The drawings of hearts therefore have a function corresponding to that performed by figurines, dolls, oranges and eventually pieces of flesh transfixed by pins or nails to control the will of a beloved. According to this system of thought, sticking the heart with pins or drawing it has an analogical effect on the victim, who would feel constrained, bound, deprived of personal will, as if nailed down.

The two pierced hearts at Steri could therefore have ceremonial implications and have been drawn to win the heart of one's beloved or commissioned by other prisoners or by some 'client' from outside. Certainly, there were not the same opportunities in the Steri prisons as in those of the Archbishopric of Palermo to have contact with the outside world. In these, Marta Frazzetta, a witch from Alcamo tried in 1618, received for example her clients and visited them through the grates, acquired ingredients for her rituals, and performed practices there aimed at winning a love, putting discord between friends, causing death, disease, and sexual desires.[12] Although in the secret prisons of the Steri there were not the same opportunities as in the Archbishopric of Palermo to have contacts with the outside world, the possibility of bribing guards, circulating notes, messages and goods is not to be excluded. This aspect leaves space for the interpretation that the graffiti of magical content in the Steri cells were also the result of similar circumstances.

[11] The same rituals are attested in ethnography, where erotic spells frequently consist in evoking, animate or inanimate natural elements. On this topic see PITRÈ 1889, vol. IV, p. 145.

[12] 'All seven [witnesses] say that many people went to talk to her and secretly talked to the offender through the grates of the prison cell and considered that they were coming for some sorceries. […] She also confessed that she had cast a spell on a man so that he would love her: she bought some peppercorns and put them in a small pot with a little vinegar and put it to boil on the fire and, while boiling the pot, she said these words: "How many peppercorns are you, how many devils from me do you come, and for all the good you want me enter the heart of such a one" (naming the one whom the offender wanted her to love) and afterwards she said: "Holy Devil, Holy Devil", many times while boiling the pot', translated by the author from AHNM, l. 900, ff. 73r.–77r.

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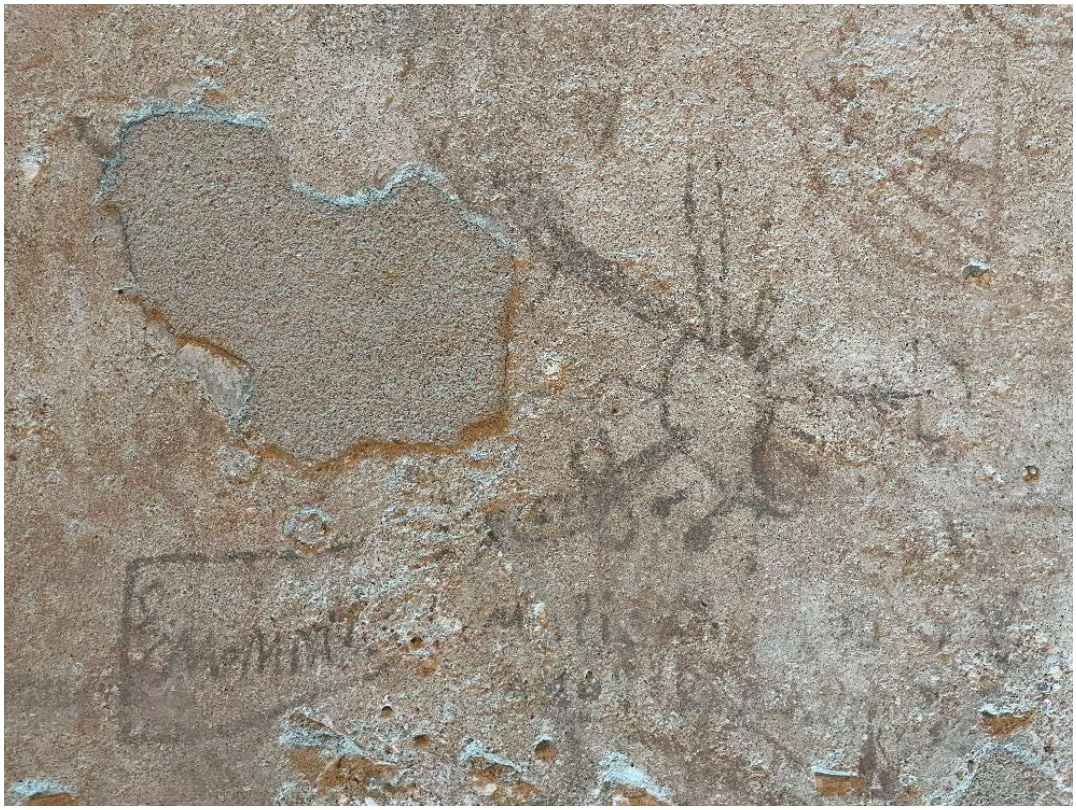

Fig. 1 Heart pierced by needles, nails, pins, daggers, swords, and arrows.
Secret prisons (cell 3, ground floor), Steri, Palermo. Photo: Pier L. J. Mannella

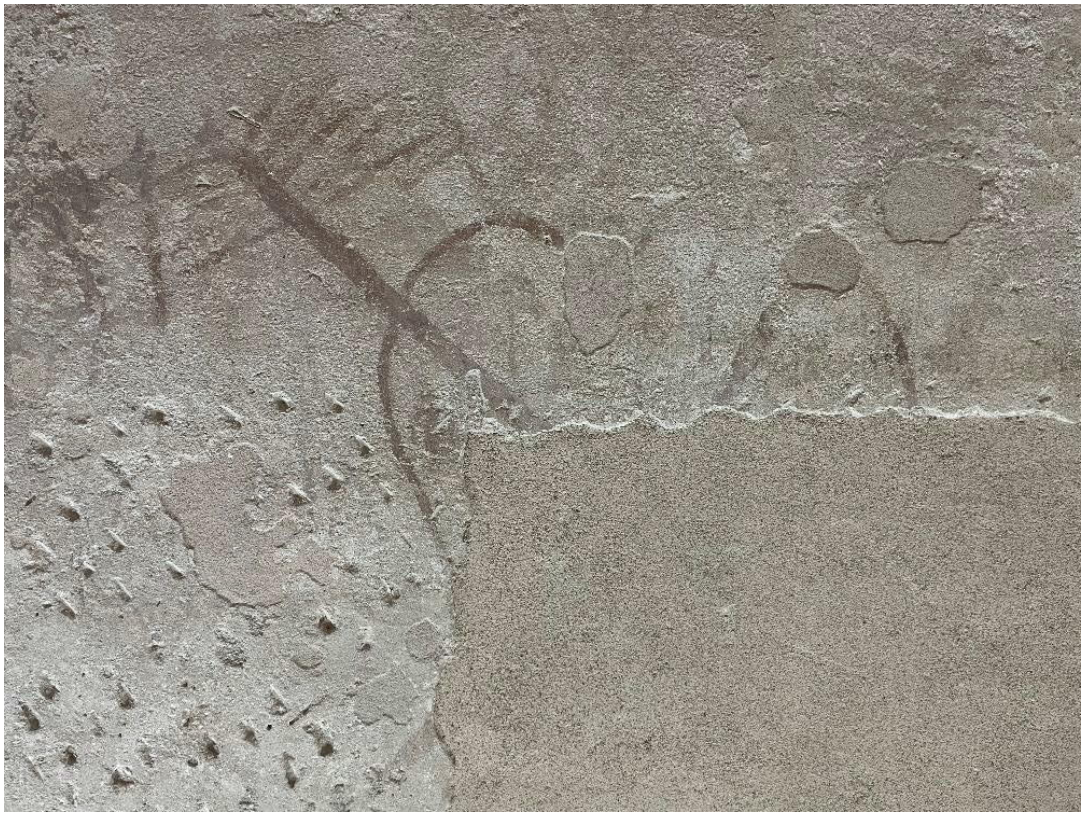

Fig. 2 Heart inscribed and pierced by an arrow.
Secret prisons (cell 1, ground floor), Steri, Palermo. Photo: Pier L. J. Mannella

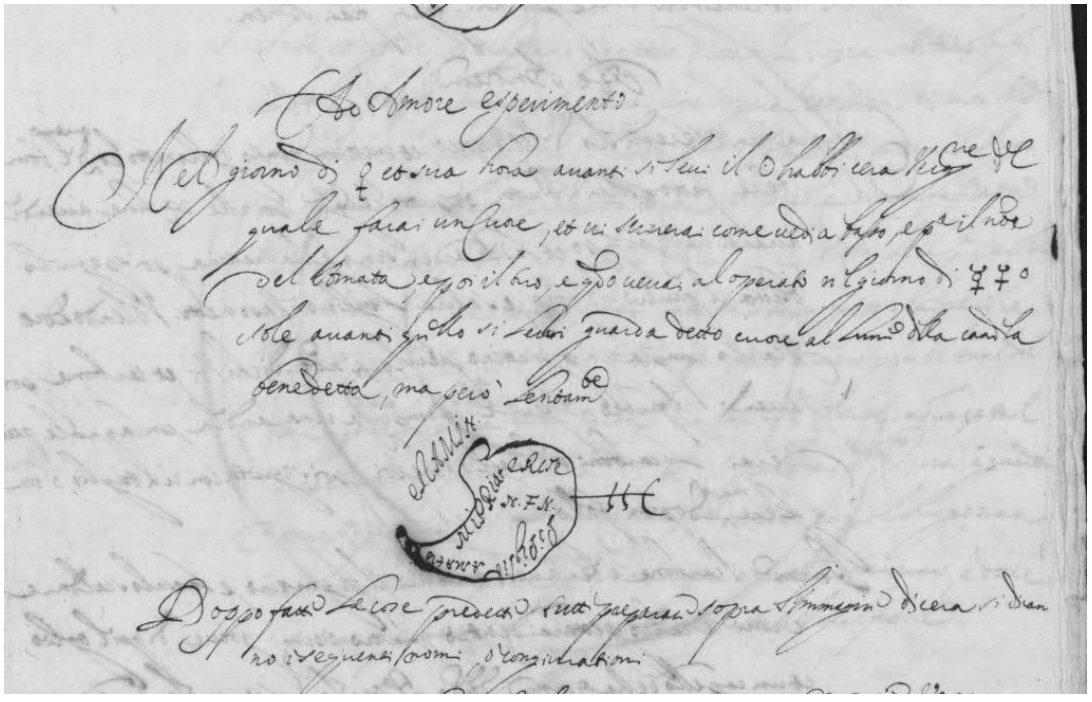

Fig. 3 Erotic spell titled *Ad Amore esperimento*.
Necromantic book, Archivio Storico di Venezia (ASV), Inq., case 108

2 Art in Spaces of Confinement

Artistic Practices in Spaces of Repression after the Spanish Civil War: The Belchite Prison Camp

Alberto Castán Chocarro

In 1881, the Ukrainian painter Marie Bashkirtseff traveled to Spain in search of a climate that would alleviate her illness and fascinated by the exotic vision of the country at that time. Upon arriving in Granada, she was immediately attracted to the local prison, located just opposite the cathedral, and was able to visit it. 'Je voudrais bien faire un tableau, là. J'ai la permission', she wrote in her diary.[1] And so she did. She was pleased with the model who posed for her, although displeased at being watched all the time by the other prisoners and the guards. Aware of the lightness of his crime – exchanging counterfeit money – she decided to invent 'un petit roman que je raconterai à Paris',[2] turning him into a murderer condemned to death. One may wonder why a twenty-two years old girl wanted to paint in the prison of a foreign city where she had only been for five days. The interest aroused at that time by the theories of the Italian physician Cesare Lombroso, who linked certain physical features with criminality, may well have had an influence on her. It's possible to find an echo of those ideas in some passages of Bashkirtseff's diary where she wrote 'Car il a une tête à tout faire'.[3] Her diaries, written since she was fifteen years old, where published by her family soon after her dead in 1884. These became a success that caught the attention of Lombroso, who used them to make his own diagnosis: 'La mégalomanie et la vanité se devinent chez elle dans toutes les premières années de sa vie'.[4] He subscribed to his opinions in a letter sent to Max Nordau, an author famous for applying Lombroso's theories to art and artists at the end of the century through his book *Entartung*: 'D'accordo con lei. La Bashkitrhieff [sic] era una megalomane e una pazza morale'.[5] The complaints sent by Bashkirtseff's mother to Lombroso were of no avail. The curious young woman who approached a prison in Granada and observed and

[1] 'I'd like to make a painting there. I've the permission', translated by the author from BASHKIRTSEFF 1890, vol. 2, p. 324.
[2] 'A little novel that I'll tell in Paris', translated by the author from ibid., p. 326.
[3] 'Because he has a head capable of everything', translated by the author from ibid, p. 326.
[4] 'Megalomania and vanity are evident in her early years', translated by the author from LOMBROSO 1891, p. 694.
[5] 'I agree with you. The Bashkirtseff [sic] was a megalomaniac and a moral lunatic', translated by the author from Cesare Lombroso, letter sent to Max Nordau, 20 December 1891, <https://lombrosoproject.unito.it/en/correspondence-detail/?id=3873>, accessed 5 April 2023.

painted the prisoners, perhaps imbued with the 'scientific' theories of the moment, ended up becoming a subject of analysis for expressing her most intimate thoughts.

Cesare Lombroso was also the author of *Palimsesti del carcere* (1888) in which he recognizes the atavistic need felt by prisoners to express their thoughts through figures, whether on the wall, ceramics or through tattooing.[6] Bashkirtseff recorded that some prisoners in Granada occupied their time in carpentry and shoemaking workshops, among others, while the rest knitted as 'paisibles ménagères';[7] an activity in which she portrayed her model. Work, voluntary or forced, the need to occupy one's time, and the search for forms of expression were intertwined in the prison environment. In the case of artists, this last need, the one to express themselves, was particularly urgent, as we shall show through the study of the repression exercised during the early years of Franco's regime.

Artistic Practices in Republican Prisons During the Spanish Civil War

Although the moment of greatest repression was experienced by Republican artists who were unwilling or unable to go into exile after the end of the civil war, there are earlier graphic testimonies. Artists were persecuted during the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–1930) and during the years of the Second Republic (1931–936),[8] but it was after the *coup d'état* of 1936 that the incarceration of artists multiplied. Among the most fortunate were two artists, Ángel Novella and Eduardo Lagarde, both imprisoned by the Republican authorities during the war, who were able to show their creations after Franco's victory.

Ángel Novella, according to his own account, was incarcerated by both armies: he almost lost his life at the hands of the rebels, while the Republicans sent him to the San Miguel de los Reyes prison in Valencia.[9] In the latter he wrote poems and made a series of twenty-six pencil portraits of his companions, which he titled *Cautivos por España* (Captives for Spain). Anonymous faces traced in painstaking detail, including a woman and two pubescent children, now in the Museo de Teruel. He exhibited them at the Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza in Teruel in February 1940, coinciding with the visit of General Varela to

[6] LOMBROSO 1888.
[7] 'Peaceful housewives', translated by the author from BASHKIRTSEFF 1890, p. 326.
[8] Among others, the artists Ramón Acín, Carlos Maside, Alfons Vila *Schum* o Luis Quintanilla. On this topic see, CHAVES 2023.
[9] BARLÉS 1988.

commemorate the 'liberation' of the city, accompanied by another series dedicated 'to the glorious ruins of Teruel'.[10]

Eduardo Lagarde, military, architect and draftsman, was captured by the Republicans in San Sebastian and was held in several prisons in the Basque Country until June 1937. His experience inspired a series entitled *Once meses en las cárceles de Euskadi* (Eleven months in the prisons of Euskadi), which he exhibited in San Sebastian in 1938 and in Madrid in 1940. [11] The Biblioteca Nacional de España and the Instituto de Patrimonio Cultural preserve photographs of some of Lagarde's drawing in which he portrayed, with firm and expressive strokes, the overcrowded situation in prisons such as the prison-boat of Arántzazu and scenes of prayer, transfer, punishment and 'hygiene'. Even worse was the fate of artists who defended democratic legality, since they were harshly repressed after the war.

Redemptive Work and Visual Arts in Franco's Prisons

In 1940, the Ministry of Justice estimated the number of prisoners at 270,000. They counted only those with final convictions, leaving out thousands of people awaiting trial.[12] Although the use of labour in Spanish prisons had a long tradition, it was Franco's prison system that knew how to take real advantage of this enormous human force, while at the same time creating an instrument of propaganda. For this purpose, the Patronato Central de Redención de Penas por el Trabajo (Central Board for the Redemption of Penalties through Work) was set up through an Order of October 7, 1938. It was the brainchild of Father José Pérez del Pulgar, member of the Board and author of *La solución que España da al problema de sus presos políticos* (1939), although, as he himself insisted, it was 'a personal initiative of the *Generalisimo*'.[13] The aim was not only to obtain cheap labour – a daily wage of two pesetas was fixed, one and a half from them were retained for food – but also to free the nation 'from the discomfort and care that their prolonged detention entailed'[14] by redeeming part of their sentence – one day's redemption for two days' work in the first years – as well as to reconcile the prisoners with religion and the fatherland. Hence, the work was not only physical, but

[10] 'Teruel. Clausura de una exposición', *Heraldo de Aragón*, 1 March 1940, p. 3.
[11] Lagarde's drawings were also used to illustrate books such as *La vida en las cárceles de Euzkadi* by Javier Gómez Acebo, and *Presos de los rojo-separatistas, navarros, guipuzcoanos y vizcaínos* by Federico Carasa, both from 1938. On this see ESCUDERO 2022.
[12] GÓMEZ BRAVO 2009, p. 24.
[13] PÉREZ DEL PULGAR 1939, p. 49.
[14] Ibid., p. 50.

also spiritual and intellectual: 'If I manage to return to society, with a clean heart and soul, criminals capable of redeeming themselves for Spain, I will consider myself satisfied', Franco said in January 1939.[15]

In November 1940, the first decree referring to the redemption of sentences 'by means of intellectual and artistic efforts' was promulgated.[16] However, as Óscar Chaves has expressed, the inaccuracy of the rule turned the subject 'into an individual and unequal negotiation between the prisoner and the institution'.[17] In any case, it meant that certain imprisoned artists were able to redeem their sentences by training their fellow prisoners – and the latter by attending their classes – as well as producing plastic works, mainly religious, in the prison environment itself, within workshops that were called 'destinies'. There was even an attempt to commercialize the inmates' artistic and industrial works.[18]

The booklet *La Justicia de Franco*, published in Mexico in August 1940 and dedicated to the first year of the Patronato, summarizes some of the actions related to the artistic aspect of the redemption of sentences, such as the organization of propaganda in prisons, the setting up of workshops in Alcalá de Henares prison —whose action was to be extended to the creation of artistic imagery and serve as a model to other centers— or the founding of the weekly magazine *Redención*, written and illustrated by the prisoners themselves and the only press allowed in jails.[19] Among the special classes taught to inmates, drawing was already mentioned. The work of religious and political propaganda was carried out profusely on the walls and spaces of the prisons. This was the case of the Valencia Modelo prison, which had an important plastic arts workshop, where the prisoner Antonio Castaño devised a mural program for national-catholic exaltation that included portraits of Franco and José Antonio, allegories of Law and Justice, flags, shields with St. John's Eagle, the yoke and arrows of the *Falange*, as well as slogans of patriotic exaltation.[20] An experience that would also occur in other prisons such as Porlier (Madrid) or the Modelo in Barcelona. The photographs taken by Otto Wunderlich (1886–1977) in the female prison of Ventas (Madrid), show how the religious

[15] Ibid, p. 10. Statements published in *El Diario Vasco*, 1 January 1939.
[16] Ministerio de Justicia, 'Decreto de 23 de noviembre de 1940 por el que se concede el beneficio de redención de pena a los condenados que durante su estancia en la Prisión, logren instrucción religiosa o cultural', *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 334, 29 November 1940, p. 8181.
[17] CHAVES 2019, p. 194.
[18] 'Se dará salida en el mercado a los trabajos artísticos e industriales de los reclusos', *Redención*, 15 September 1939, p. 1.
[19] *La justicia* 1940.
[20] AGRAMUNT 2005, pp. 387–391; CHAVES 2019, p. 202.

iconography paired with quotes from Pilar Primo de Rivera.[21] The chapels were obviously one of the spaces that received the most attention, even in provisional prisons and in those where we have no evidence of artistic workshops. It is the case of Pueblo Nuevo (Barcelona), where the inmates 'executed and paid for' a mural depicting the Descent from the Cross.[22] Even though the documentation of the prison of Torrero (Zaragoza) does not mention the existence of artistic workshops, the weekly magazine *Redención* mentions a 'Gothic style altarpiece' crafted by the prisoners.[23] In this latter detention center, as in so many others, the redemption of sentences by means of intellectual effort in artistic matters consisted also on the organization of the music band, the choral society and the *rondalla*, groups that were necessary for the ceremonies in prison life.

However, the best graphic testimonies of life in jail came from artists who obtained special permits to paint or draw, sometimes to contribute to the support of their families, or who carried out this activity in secrecy. The list of authors is extensive, as proven by Francisco Agramunt's work, but Chaves has been the one who analyzed the phenomenon in depth, providing it with the necessary critical apparatus and studying the most relevant cases.[24] Chaves has underlined how the authors of such works were considered subaltern and the hidden discourse usual for these creations was a form of resistance to power. They were a means of personal expression in inhumane environments, ruled by hunger, cold, overcrowding, mistreatment and even the danger of being executed. Portraiture was especially practiced, as a formula for recognition and self-recognition, as well as the representation of moments of daily life in prison, testifying to the reality in which they were immersed. There are portraits such as those made by Pedro Antequera, who ranged from realism to caricature, or David Alvarez, who was able to exhibit his drawings in prison before being executed.[25] José Manaut drew some other portraits and he was also able to capture the prison reality through painting and drawing.[26] The vision offered by José Robledano in the prisons of Porlier and Valdenoceda (Burgos) is much starker compared to the 'redemptive'

[21] Spanish Falangist politician who played a prominent role during Franco's regime. Founder of the Sección Femenina, the women's branch of the Falange party, which was concerned with training women as good patriots, Christians, and wives.
[22] *La Justicia* 1940, p. 23.
[23] 'Provincial de Zaragoza', *Redención*, 17 May 1941, p. 3.
[24] AGRAMUNT 2005; CHAVES 2023.
[25] LERTXUNDI GALIANA 2011.
[26] *José Manaut* 2002.

experience of the prisoner depicted by Juan Pons in Torrero.[27] However, in Pons' forty-nine illustrations, which capture almost every space and daily situation experienced by the prisoners, there are also shades of resistance alluding to overcrowding, poverty, indoctrination and even the execution of death sentences. Ramón Puyol — the last name in an incomplete enumeration of some outstanding cases — devoted special attention to the work of prisoners in the penitentiary workshops where he was able to reduce his sentence.[28] These situations are not very different from those that must have been experienced in the Belchite prison camp.

Artistic Practices at Belchite Prison Camp

The Franco regime endowed the ruins of Belchite (Zaragoza) with a symbolic value and promised to build a new village next to them.[29] This made it necessary to install a penal detachment in order to undertake one of the most ambitious works of the immediate postwar period. This project was under the responsibility of the *Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas y Reparaciones*, the governmental office in charge of rebuilding the country. Initially staffed by soldiers who were war prisoners, many of them foreigners, but later on they were gradually joined by convicted political prisoners redeeming their sentences.[30] In January 1940 they started building the prison camp and, on May 29, the Minister of the Interior, Ramón Serrano Súñer, visited the facilities that housed the 665 prisoners, the chapel still unfinished, and also the workshops where the convicts worked: 'healthy men, which proves their excellent diet and work regime'.[31] It was then that one of them, 'surnamed Rocarol, an excellent draughtsman, showed him an album of decorative motifs in the Aragonese style to be used in the different constructions'.[32] The minister, as reported in the chronicle in *Heraldo de Aragón*, considering his behavior and the reports received, 'promised to intercede [...] in

[27] CHAVES 2023, pp. 301–309; 315–320.
[28] Ibid., pp. 309–314. See also BOLUFER 2020.
[29] During the Spanish Civil War, the village of Belchite was partially destroyed after a bloody battle (24 August 1937–6 September 1937) in which the Republican army managed to seize it on its advance towards Zaragoza. Franco's propaganda turned Belchite into a symbol of resistance against Republican barbarism, preserving the ruins and building a new town next to the old one.
[30] Among others LÓPEZ 1995; RODRIGO 2006, pp. 301–322; MICHONNEAU 2017.
[31] 'El ministro de la Gobernación visitó ayer las ruinas de Belchite y los pueblos de Fuentes y Quinto', *Heraldo de Aragón*, 30 May 1940, pp. 6, 8.
[32] Translated by the author from ibid.

order to achieve, if possible, his release on parole'.[33] The rest of the media that echoed the information affirmed that it had indeed been granted.

The prisoner was Josep Rocarol i Faura, a painter and set designer sentenced to twelve years and one day in prison for collaborating with the *Generalitat* in the protection of the artistic heritage during the war.[34] On December 20, 1939 he had been transferred to Belchite from the Modelo prison in Barcelona to redeem his sentence.[35] The promised parole did not arrive until December 11, 1942. Before leaving the camp, he gave Lieutenant Colonel Roque Adrada, chief engineer of the new town works, four albums of drawings entitled *Apuntes de Aragón*. They include images of Belchite and its surroundings (La Puebla de Albortón, Fuentes de Ebro, Letux and Codo), views of the Pyrenees (Biescas, Oto, Broto, Gavín and Torla) and a couple of notes taken in Cutanda and Navarrete del Río (Teruel).[36]

Rocarol's drawing and design skills were used by Regiones Devastadas in the construction of the new Belchite. Shortly after arriving there, he painted at least three views of the town, emphasizing its ruinous aspect. One of them was printed in color in *Reconstrucción*, the journal published by Regiones Devastadas.[37] However, documenting the disaster was of relative utility, so his drawings, from being a series of urban views, soon become more technical, with attention to architectural and decorative details, sometimes with accurate measurements. Those are the ones he showed to the Minister Serrano, designed to function as models for the buildings of the new town.

Regiones Devastadas had an *Oficina Técnica de Detalles Arquitectónicos* (Technical Office of Architectural Details) dedicated to the study of the elements of popular architecture and decoration 'that define the character of each Spanish region or *comarca*'.[38] To prevent them from being lost, they set up a dossier on Spanish Folk Art that would accurately copy them in order to be eventually reproduced. Rocarol, although there is no documentation to confirm it, may have worked directly or indirectly to supply this repertoire. None of his works allows us to point out the psychology of the author, not even to document the conditions he lived in. They are strictly the fruit of a 'labour' situation to which he was forced. That is why he left

[33] Ibid.
[34] CASTÁN 2017.
[35] File of Josep Rocarol i Faura, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya, Fondo Centre Penitenciari d'Homes de Barcelona, Presó Model, n.º 1-236.
[36] CASTÁN, SÁNCHEZ 2017.
[37] *Reconstrucción*, 1 (April 1940).
[38] 'Arquitectura popular española. Detalles decorativos', *Reconstruccción*, 13 (June 1941), p. 26.

them with the Lieutenant Colonel Adrada when he was released. He closed that stage of his life so completely that he even glossed over it in his memoirs.[39]

In 1955, Rocarol wrote to Vicente García Martínez upon learning that he had been awarded a prize at the *XIII Salón de Artistas Aragoneses* and reminded him of 'those distant (but unforgettable) days in Belchite', when he assured him that 'we would still have satisfaction'.[40] It was a note of optimism from a painter who had been sentenced for 'aiding the rebellion', a broad-spectrum crime that included left-wing militants and trade unionists.[41]

Vicente García first spent time in the Torrero prison where he redeemed a month's sentence as an '*ordenanza de rotonda*', i.e. collaborating with those in charge of the prison in September 1939.[42] Then he was transferred to Belchite, from where he was released on parole on February 5, 1941.[43] The final release did not come until September 1944, after 2137 days of prison, with 235 days for remission of sentences. However, he was still under surveillance during the following year and was denied its termination. During his time in Belchite, García participated in the reconstruction of the sanctuary of the Virgen del Pueyo, specifically in the restoration of its mural decoration. At the same time, he had the opportunity to make some pencil drawings in a couple of small notebooks.[44] These drawings are less finished and descriptive than those of Rocarol: mere sketches on paper of lesser quality and dimensions. They coincide in some subjects such as views of Belchite, interiors of kitchens and bedrooms with their traditional furniture or architectural details, but García's work focuses on two fundamental themes: the sanctuary of the Virgen del Pueyo and daily life in the prison camp (fig. 1).

Although Franco's propaganda insisted that the sanctuary had been destroyed 'by a terrible bombing' by the Republican army, García's drawings show that only some of the buildings on one side of the courtyard had collapsed.[45] He portrayed almost every view of the ensemble, both inside and out, with details of the mural decoration and altarpieces, the prisoners working and resting, and even the *santeros*. The works were well advanced during the visit of

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[39] ROCAROL 1999.

[40] Letter by Josep Rocarol sent to Vicente Garcia, 20 December 1955, Documentary Fund of Vicente Garcia, IAACC Pablo Serrano, Zaragoza.

[41] *Sentencia firme*, 12 April 12 1938, Documentary Fund of Vicente Garcia, IAACC Pablo Serrano, Zaragoza.

[42] Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zaragoza, Relaciones nominales de reclusos con redención de penas por esfuerzo intelectual entre los años 1941 y 1944, ES/AHPZ-A/005718/000002, <https://dara.aragon.es/opac/app/item/?p=0&q=penas+esfuerzo+intelectual&ob=re:1&vm=nv&i=52942>, accessed 5 April 2023.

[43] Certificate of final release of Vicente Garcia, Documentary Fund of Vicente Garcia, IAACC Pablo Serrano, Zaragoza.

[44] The notebooks are preserved in the Documentary Fund of Vicente Garcia, IAACC Pablo Serrano, Zaragoza.

[45] Pedro Gómez, 'El símbolo de los dos Belchites', *Reconstrucción*, 1 (April 1940), p. 7.

the ministry Serrano Súñer, and for him even an exhibition with plans and watercolors of what would be the new Belchite was prepared. Regarding the images of daily life in the camp, some of its scenes are identified: *La celda n. 13* (The Cell n. 13)*, La noche buena en la prisión* (Christmas Eve in the Prison), a completely empty cell block and several figures leaning against the walls; *El sueño de los dormidos* (The Dream of Those Who Sleep), in which a prisoner appears in front of a court, probably a memory; *Charanga del campamento* (Prison Charanga), where three prisoners are playing musical instruments; *Hora del rancho* (Meal Time) or *Brigada del pico y pala* (Pick and Shovel Brigade), (fig. 2). Others are easily recognizable, such as the one that portrays the prisoners singing the *Cara al sol* and making the fascist salute in front of the chapel (fig. 3), the inside of the barracks or the moments of work. Despite their undramatized character a certain act of resistance can be observed in García's drawings. They also confirm that routines varied little from one center to another. Hence the coincidence with some of the scenes portrayed by Juan Pons in Torrero.

Only two drawings point to a later reuse of the notebooks or, more probably, to an attempt to recover the lost freedom through a pencil: the sketch of a triptych with the *Pilar* of Zaragoza in the center and, especially, a view of the Ebro with a group of bathers in an idyllic summer scene.

At the Margins of the System

The workshops grouped around the Belchite prison camp had to cover all the construction needs of the new town: carpentry, lime kilns, tile and brick factories, mechanical workshop, blacksmith shop, plumbing, metallurgy, painting, electricity, warehouses, etc. The journal *Reconstrucción* published sixty stills taken from a documentary made by Regiones Devastadas to show the work developed there.[46] According to Carlos Bitrián, about 70% of Belchite's inmate population were skilled laborers.[47] Rocarol, García and others contributed, by force, with their drawing and painting skills. A photograph that appeared in *Reconstrucción* shows four Belchite prisoners on the drawing board. Garcia portrayed another prisoner, *El Mangas*, in the same activity (fig. 4).

Although Belchite did not have plastic arts workshops, the surplus materials, and perhaps a certain relaxation of controls, offered the prisoners the opportunity to express themselves or,

[46] 'Reconstrucción de Belchite', *Reconstrucción*, 16 (October 1941), pp. 29-32.
[47] BITRIÁN 2018, p. 18.

at least, to kill time. Another of García's drawings shows what seems to be the sketch of a modern sculptural head. It may have been the fruit of his imagination, although it does not conform to the formulas he used in his painting. In any case, there is no guarantee that such a work was ever produced in the Belchite workshops. We do have evidence of other spontaneous creations, of an amateur nature.

Even though it was a penal detachment, it was not possible to completely isolate the convicts from the villagers. The prisoners' own families sought lodging among the locals when they could visit them. The wife of the inmate Pedro Ribes Guitart, who entered the camp on August 1, 1942, was staying with the family of the girl Aurora Baquero. In gratitude for her hospitality, Ribes used a school photograph as a base to portray her with a book in her hands, wishing her a happy future. It is a pencil drawing that denotes some academic training. This family also received a gift in form of a wooden parcheesi and checkers game. In the center, the initials of the now anonymous author E. H. S., and the date '12–11–1944'.

Artistic practices in the spaces of Franco's repression responded to a targeted campaign of re-education and propaganda. Some prisoners were forced to collaborate in order to reduce their sentences and improve their living conditions and those of their families. In the margins of that system there were those who found loopholes to leave their testimony. Small cracks for resistance and resilience, whose results make it possible to complete the story of those victims of reprisals.

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Fig. 1 Vicente García Martínez, Untitled (*Interior del barracón / Interior of the barrack*), c. 1940. García Fernández Sisters Collection, Deposit at IAACC Pablo Serrano. Photo: Adrián Rafols

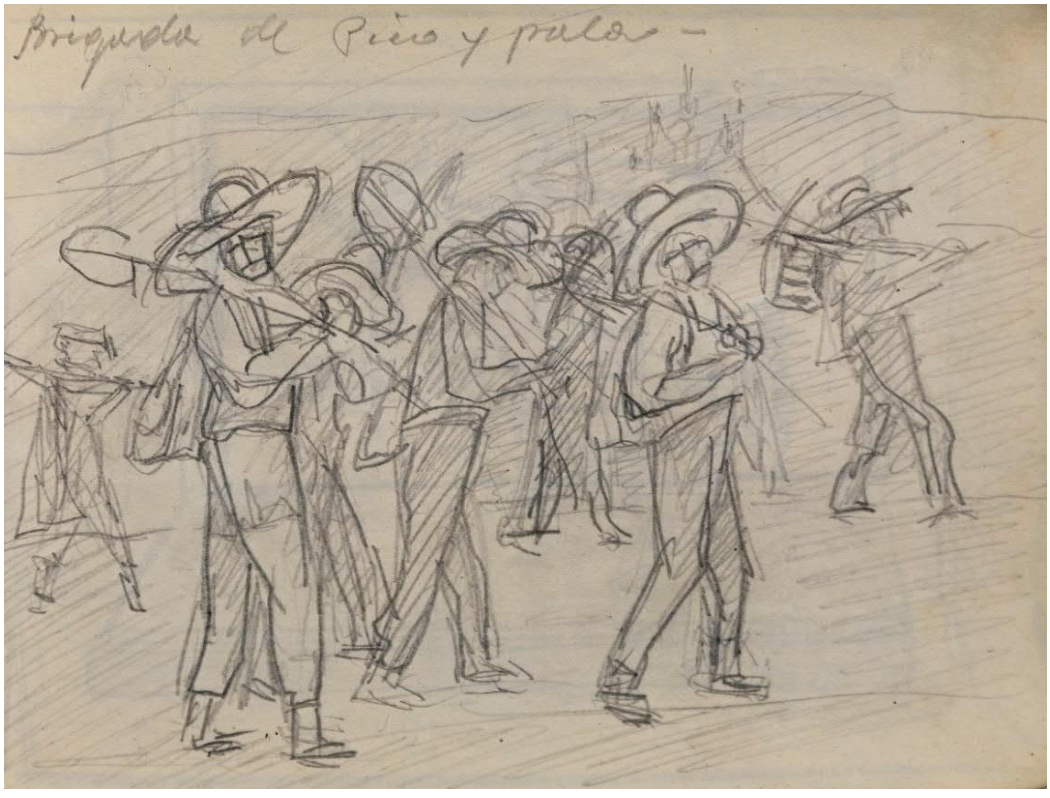

Fig. 2 Vicente García Martínez, *Brigada de pico y pala / Pick and Shovel Brigade*, c. 1940. García Fernández Sisters Collection, Deposit at IAACC Pablo Serrano. Photo: Adrián Rafols

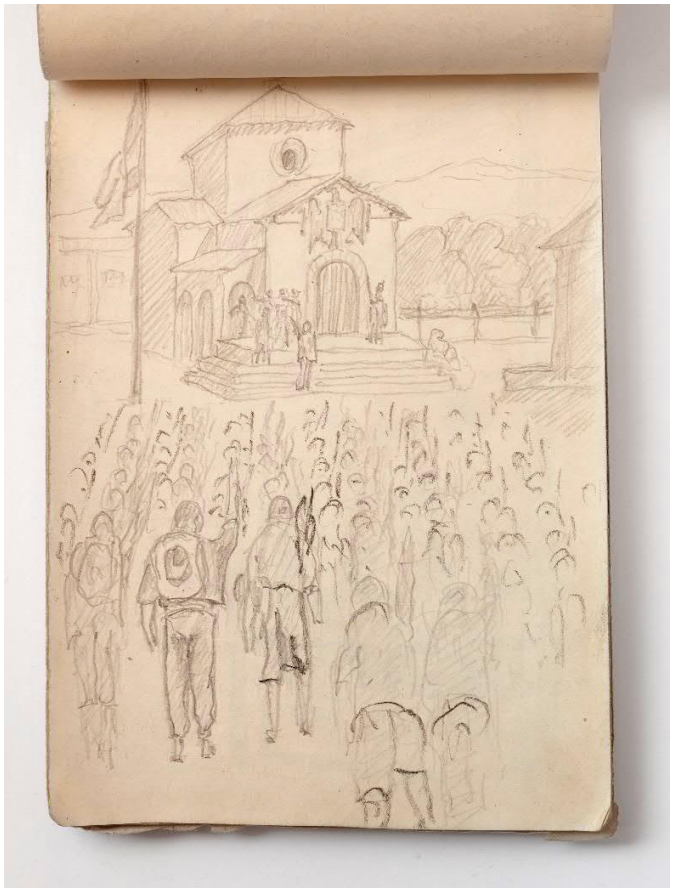

Fig. 3 Vicente García Martínez, Untitled (*Presos realizando el saludo fascista ante la capilla del Campamento penitenciario de Belchite / Prisoners performing the fascist salute in front of the Belchite Prison Camp chapel*), c. 1940.
García Fernández Sisters Collection, Deposit at IAACC Pablo Serrano. Photo: Adrián Rafols

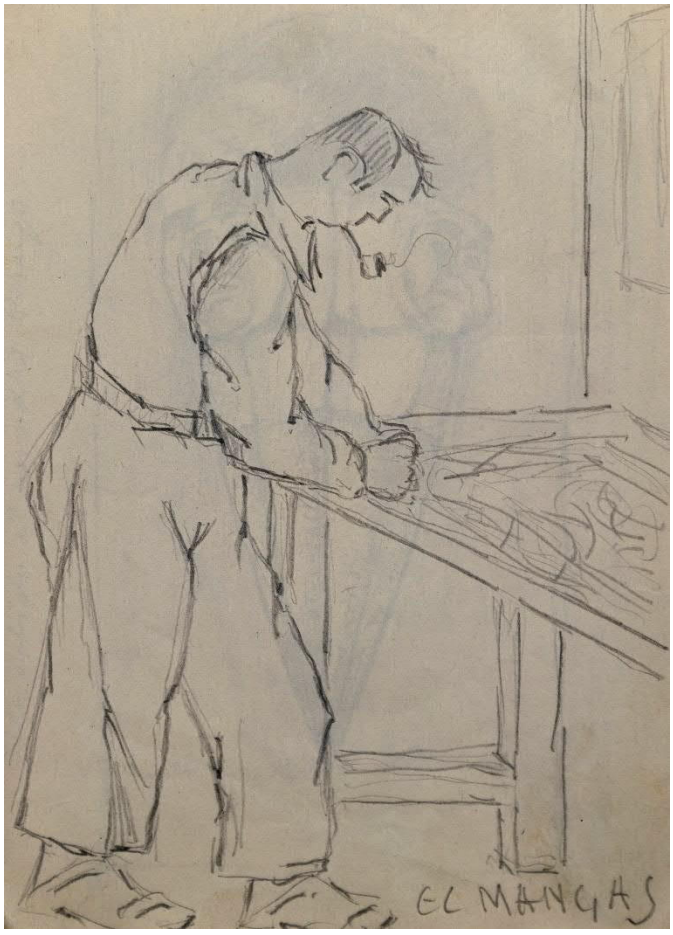

Fig. 4 Vicente García Martínez, *El Mangas*, c. 1940.
García Fernández Sisters Collection, Deposit at IAACC Pablo Serrano. Photo: Adrián Rafols

Scribbles in Spite of All. Visual and Boredom Memory in the Historical Prisons

Jorge Jiménez López

Isolation in a closed space is one of the most atrocious forms of torture, regardless of the environmental conditions. A good example of this is the testimony of the protagonist of the novel by Stefan Zweig *Schachnovelle,* who, despite being confined in a seemingly friendly place like a hotel room, recalls:

> There was nothing to do, nothing to hear, nothing to see. All around, and unbroken, was a void, a complete vacuum in time and space. I walked up and down, up and down, endlessly. But even thoughts, however trivial, need an anchorage, otherwise they begin to spin and chase themselves in mad circles. And they can't bear a vacuum either.[1]

The words Stefan Zweig puts in the mouth of Dr. B. evoke that state we all have experienced, to a greater or lesser degree, even without having been imprisoned. A moment when nothing can be done and the mind flies looking for an anchor point.

One of the aspects that has caught my attention during the incursion into the world of prison graffiti within the GAP project, has been the fact that specialized historiography has prioritized the interest and interpretations of mural inscriptions as a symbolic element; presuming, in general, that their creators had some kind of expressive will. It would seem that linking their creation to a state of chronified boredom would trivialize their nature, as if conceiving them as doodles would make them less interesting, even for the micro-stories proposed by Carlo Ginzburg.[2]

Thus, I aim to put forward some ideas from the field of art history and visual studies that, in my opinion, not only contribute to a better understanding of this material, but also introduce a perspective that has remained alien to historiographical production until now. The origin of my reflections comes from the close relationship that I perceive between prison scribbles and those *piaceri di noia* ('pleasures of boredom') that so often fill the margins of folios and flyleaves in many books.[3] In both spaces people have spontaneously felt the impulse to make some kind of intervention and, also in both, there is a peculiar presence of the authority they

[1] ZWEIG 1983, pp. 24–25.
[2] GINZBURG 1980.
[3] ZEVOLA 1991.

must inevitably interact with. Michel Camille, one of the authors who has best dealt with medieval *marginalia*, stated: 'Selon moi, le center ne peut subsister sans les marges'.[4] The incisions on the prison walls act in a similar way. Walls filled with inscriptions and figures of all kinds: apotropaic, mocking, ironic, cryptic, personal, automatic, etc., whose presence oscillates between the authority's benevolent tolerance and the heroic provocation of those subjected to that authority.

Once boredom has been introduced as a determining factor, both for motivation and for their creation,[5] we can delve into the contextual conditioning factor imposed by space and its function in the understanding of drawings and writings. Ernst Gombrich laid the foundations of the elements that influence reception. He devoted part of his studies to assessing the artists' capacity for expression and how this could be detected. According to his approach, the emotional component plays a fundamental role in communication. Emotion is conveyed by means of natural or learned symptoms, in such a way that reception is always filtered by the cultural conventions of each individual and of each period of time.[6] Therefore, it must be assumed that any interpretative proposal of this material, even a simple description, partakes of *anachronism*; for it lies in that mediation that occurs between artifacts that request an affective response and, in turn, encourage the contemporary historian's or critic's desire to generate meaning.[7] Regarding prison graffiti, this happens in a particular way, because the object of study is covered by an atmosphere impregnated with the compassion and immorality in which the mural incisions were created.

The dilemma is particularly relevant because it transcends the academic debate, since the punitive stays of the past are part of the dramatic scenography of events and punishments that are abominable for this century's democracies. They are 'part of the normality of a culture in which shock has become a leading stimulus of consumption and source of value'[8]. Good examples are the musealized penitentiary spaces that we have had the opportunity to analyze during the intensive study weeks of the GAP project.

Susan Sontag is part of that group of intellectuals who, at the turn of the century, observed with suspicion some of the political and intellectual practices surrounding the visual, oral and

[4] 'In my opinion, the center cannot exist without the margins', translated by the author from CAMILLE 1997, p. 13.
[5] For an approach to the relationship between boredom and creativity see: VELASCO-CABALLERO 2017.
[6] GOMBRICH 1971, p. 61.
[7] MOXEY 2004, pp. 102–103; MOXEY 2015, p. 89.
[8] SONTAG 2003, p. 23.

material vestiges that testified to the atrocities of the bloody hundred-year period that was coming to an end. This is not the time to delve into the broad debate about the duty or necessity of guarding memory and its places; however, it is appropriate to incorporate some of the notions defended in this field of study to the case of prison graffiti, given the very nature of these spaces. In this sense, the words of Tzvetan Todorov resonated during the visits to Florence, Zaragoza, Cologne and Palermo: 'The path that skirts the pitfalls of sanctification and of trivialization, that leads us neither to serve only our own interest nor to give lessons only to others. But that straight narrow past does exist'.[9] In all four cases, graffiti are encapsulated in showcases, like relics (fig. 1), with lighting systems that accentuate an atmosphere both tragic and aseptic, sharing space with the most banal reactions and interventions of today's visitors.

About Boredom in the Cells

As I mentioned at the beginning, there is an extremely close relationship between the marginal surface of the folios and the walls of the spaces where people are deprived of their liberty. I have pointed out a certain parallelism between the authorities of the respective spaces: the main text for the folios and the institution for the prison. The connection is not reduced to a mere hierarchical or power tension, the walls of the cell become the personal space – intimate, private and everyday – of the amanuensis in which 'the free flight of his thought when testing a pen, or in the deliberate preservation of his particular, biographical or literary memory, he creates an intimate space, not subject (in principle) to censorship and not necessarily restricted by the prevailing social conventions'.[10]

So, in both spaces – on the margins of the book and on the walls – contents are close to each other. This other observation by Alberto Montaner Frutos and Diego Navarro Bonilla on the marginal scribbles of the modern book serves as further proof of the affinity between the two spaces:

> Though these personal notes may sometimes tell us about the circulation of the forbidden, what they always do tell us about are the personal tastes of their writer, who transcribed from memory or copied from various written models those pieces that, either erotic or religious, provocative or conformist, marginal or central, were on their mind. They also wrote what they expressly wanted to keep as a personal archive, not necessarily a non-transferable one, a mirror of tastes and inclinations, of their hobbies and interests, where the margin is only worth the nook of conscience

[9] TODOROV 2003, p. 176.
[10] MONTANER FRUTOS, NAVARRO BONILLA 2006, p. 535, translated by the author.

> in which each one of us is personally confronted with their memory and their own heritage, their illusions and, why not, their fears.[11]

In fact, prison walls show abundant names of people interwoven with melancholic, angry, vengeful, sentimental, humorous, sexual or literary expressions (fig. 2).

Words and figures merge and blend on the wall and on the page; on this occasion I will prioritize the interest on the latter. To this end, I consider it fundamental to recover some of Ernst Gombrich's proposals regarding the marginal scribbles of an account book of the *Banco di Napoli*.[12]

> For them, the idea of 'art' was no doubt connected with mastery, and they never aspired to be masters. Thus, we owe the pleasure of looking at these fruits of their boredom to that radical change that came to identify artistic activity not so much with skill as with the urge to create.[13]

In the Aragonese prisons, it is not possible to detect individuals particularly skilled in the art of drawing.[14] It seems that their interest is not the plastic result but the mere pleasure of rhythmic movement and evasion (fig. 3). This mechanical task helps focusing and does not require a high degree of concentration: 'Yet it is unlikely that these failures discouraged them. After all, they were not in earnest; they merely wished to play, and the game was rewarding whatever the outcome'.[15]

It is not usual to find representations that stand out due to the formal care of the result. However, it did not prevent the authors from taking special care in drawing certain details or elements that individualize them. For example, in the case of the Palacio de la Aljafería, according to Alejandro Martín, there are more than 1500 testimonies, 'of these 79 depicted complete ships, but surprisingly we found 16 ships of the line perfectly depicted, five of them with the Union flag, or a simplified version of the White Ensign'[16]. The representation of ships is one of the most repeated motifs in the mural incisions of any type of space prior to the nineteenth century.[17] There are mainly two reasons for their presence: one, of a general nature, is the desire or the will to leave the cell and the other attributes their creation to a sailor who, through the drawing, longs for his life prior to imprisonment. Given the large presence of

[11] Ibid., translated by the author.
[12] ZEVOLA 1991.
[13] GOMBRICH 1999, first published in Italian as the introduction in ZEVOLA 1991, pp. 7–18.
[14] For an historiographical approach on this production in the Aragonese prisons, see the article by Lozano López in this volume.
[15] GOMBRICH 1999, p. 214.
[16] MARTÍN LÓPEZ, JAMBRINA ALONSO 2015, p. 342.
[17] For example, the boats that appear in the Monastery of Rueda or in the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Magallón, collected in ROYO, GÓMEZ 2002.

ships on the walls, it is also usual to find an accumulation in the same space, which often allows to identify a naval combat, as in the Throne Room of the Aljafería.

It is not my intention to deny such interpretations in a general way, but I would like to point out that these versions may have been prioritized over the assessment of the impact this means of transport had in the pre-industrial imaginary. Probably, a whole series of contextual preconceptions, for example, the military nature of some prisoners, had a decisive influence. However, it is essential to assess the extent to which a ship was present in the daily life of the various historical periods involved since, of course, it was not the same in all of them. We must bear in mind that the Ebro river is less than a kilometer away from the Aljafería Palace. The sight of empty railroad tracks evokes a train just like a body of water conjures a ship. I would also like to point out how the boat, usually a sailboat, is part of the forms that are used today to learn how to draw and color in childhood, even in areas far from seas and rivers. Whether this situation occurred in the historical periods we are dealing with is difficult to verify, but, if so, its ubiquity and its coexistence with other images linked to buildings or nature would be easier to understand. Precisely, in that state of boredom, Gombrich notices how 'the drawing hand creates autonomously; lines or steps suggest subsequent ones'[18], therefore, it constitutes the propitious context for those simple and primitive forms that are rooted in childhood to emerge. Thus, those great naval battles that frequently appear on the walls may have more to do with an improvised composition than with measured planning.

Whatever the reason that prompted them to draw ships on the walls, it is important to pay attention to a characteristic that most of the images share: the laborious detailing of some elements in contrast to the general rough nature. Their creators are not interested in achieving a visually outstanding result, as it has already been pointed out, however, most of the drawings stand out for the large number of lines and geometric motifs that decorate objects or fill bodies. This may seem contradictory to the lack of interest and the mere exercise used for distraction, however, the mechanical and systematic repetition of a small lines helps exactly to focus and increase the desired state of evasion.

Another sign of this spontaneous, unconscious and automatic activity is the fact that most of the drawings use the line as the element that shapes the forms. When drawing anthropomorphic figures, whatever their attitude, profiles are preferred to frontal views.

[18] GOMBRICH 1999, p. 222.

These images are dominated by characters who turn their heads 'looking to the left, which comes more naturally to anybody holding the pen in his right hand'[19].

Gombrich's text is full of elements that induce a deep reflection on spontaneous, automatic and subversive creation. The author draws stimulating links between the marginal creativity of the folio, untrained forms of expression and the primitivism of Paul Klee's work. Unfortunately, at the time of his reflection, the material that we now consider historical graffiti was not an object of study; nevertheless, I have little doubt that, had it been so, he would have turned to it with avid attention, in fact, referring to urban graffiti he concludes: 'The doodle, like the graffito, is the fruit of opportunity. The two have indeed much in common, but the doodle may be described as the innocent brother of the graffito'.[20]

Emotions Transmitted and Perceived on the Walls

Another of the concerns that has occupied Ernst Gombrich in relation to images is linked to the forms and conditioning factors involved in perception, understood as a constructive and by no means passive process. In one of his earliest works, *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (1960), he reflects on the filters of meanings generated in the gazes that, along with another series of contextual and emotional conditioning factors, configure what he called the 'role of the spectator'. In his studies he constantly emphasizes how any interpretation is based on the coincidence of the elements with already known forms and habits: 'we shall still not be able to separate in our own reactions what we see from what we know. The information put into the face affects us willy nilly'.[21]

Our points of reference have nothing to do with those of the people locked within the walls of Aragonese prisons, so that their images 'need much more of a context to be unambiguous than do statements. Language can form propositions, pictures cannot'[22]. For this reason, studying the walls from the archaeologist's grid, where the lines are superimposed, until 'finding' the forms, words or marks entails the risk of transferring our visions to the visions of the past. Of course, this difficulty does not invalidate the work on prison graffiti, but one must begin by assuming that description is interpretation, no account of the past can be entirely

[19] Ibid., p. 215.
[20] Ibid., p. 225.
[21] GOMBRICH 1969, p. 57.
[22] Ibid., p. 97.

free of the value of the present and, therefore, it is possible to accept that the truth can not only be 'found' but also 'made'[23].

So, in my opinion, priority has often been given to those stories that see in the incisions the desire to communicate for history some feelings related to the longing to perpetuate their ephemeral stay in the cell, vindicate their unjust sentence, reaffirm their values or manifest their melancholic wait as *urla senza voce*[24] ('voiceless scream') that compel the viewer. Similar considerations are frequently found in works on prison graffiti. They show that the aseptic identification of images has been transcended in order to grant an emotional meaning to their creation. Gombrich pointed out the incidence that context and structure have on the perception of expressions. In most of these cases the prison environment has dominated the context, even though there is full awareness that many graffiti overlap with those of recent visitors. Therefore, there is not only the risk of interpreting a recent incision as a testimony of the past, but also the risk of romanticizing a space and, consequently, altering the historiographic and museographic narrative.

The writing instruments, the depth of the incisions, the origin or nature of the pigments, the size of the letters, the arrangement of the characters and the shapes of the *ductus* are some of the symptoms that interpreters often argue to characterize the emotional substratum of the drawings and writings. Since these are perfectly valid elements to perceive the expressiveness of their creator, it is essential to know the structural conditions that brought about this act of communication. In all cases we don't know the conditions the prisoners faced and the choices (or lack of them) they had and led them to choose one material or another, some forms over others, one instrument or another. Knowing the available options is essential to assess the chosen one and its expressive potential, as Gombrich suggests in the case of artists: 'He will select from his palette the pigment from among those available that to his mind is most like the emotion he wishes to represent. The more we know of his palette, the more likely we are to appreciate his choice'.[25]

Scribbles in Spite of All

The interpretative limits indicated so far do not lead to the denial of the scribbles as an element of study and historiographic interest, on the contrary, they point out the margins of

[23] MOXEY 2015, p. 103.
[24] PITRÈ, SCIASCIA 1999.
[25] GOMBRICH 1971, p. 85.

action. To conclude, I would like to mention one last contact with a series of approaches outside the historical periods that affect medieval and modern graffiti. I am interested in the intense debate that has been generated by the four photographs taken inside the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp by a member of the *Sonderkommando*.[26] Particularly the reflections of George Didi-Huberman in the defense of their interest as visual testimony against those who questioned their value based on the veracity and objectivity the pictures offer:

> Here is a theoretical confusion: a value of existence and an *ontological status* are reduced to *a value of use*. An ontological status? Yes, the images are 'inappropriate'. Images are not 'the whole truth' [...] Yes, images lie. But *not all of them*, not above all and not all the time.[27]

The historical graffiti constitute for us images of an atrocious, macabre past, which leads us to sympathize with these generic and anonymous victims. The swarm of doodles, like the war photographs 'are a medium that endows with 'reality' (or 'greater reality) those issues that the privileged or merely unscathed may prefer to ignore'[28]. Today we probably all feel unscathed by the justice of times past, but Susan Sontag's words are of grave concern when considered in relation to the prison scribblings of the most recent atrocious regimes. During a working visit with the GAP project team, we were able to see the different reactions of visitors to the NS Documentation Centre of the City of Cologne. In the guestbook of the narrow space of the cells, expressions of affection for the prisoners and censorship of Nazism coexist with the most banal declarations of love between visitors, messages of support for soccer teams, personal opinions on matters outside the space, even the simplified drawing of the male genital. This situation contrasted with that of the visitors' book of a small temporary exhibition on the entrance floor of the center; in that case, the museum staff had censored several messages under the following pretext: 'Revisionismus und Rechtsextremismus kriegen in unserem Haus keinen Platz. Entsprechende Einträge im Gästebuch weden unkenntlich gemacht'.[29]

It is important to include in the reflection the value of the presence and reception of graffiti on the walls for today's viewer, who is also the historian. Since the 'texture of time', the awareness of heterochronicity hence the varied meaning of time in different cultural contexts, cannot be removed from the historiographical task.[30] The perception of these images is a good

[26] DIDI-HUBERMAN 2003; WAJCMAN 1998.
[27] Translated by the author from DIDI-HUBERMAN, p. 90.
[28] SONTAG 2003, p. 14.
[29] 'Revisionism and right-wing extremism have no place in our house. Entries in the guestbook will be made unrecognizable', translated by the author.
[30] MOXEY 2015, p. 92.

example of their impact on senses and affections, revealing their interest in temporal and cultural locations far removed from the horizons in which they were created.

These factors pose a challenge not only to those who are committed to interpreting the images, but also to the viewers of that culture which exploits shock as the main source of value and stimulus for consumption.[31] Therefore, the managers of these assets should make a reflection, since there is a narrow path between the sacralization and the trivialization of the past that involves significant risks. In this sense, Tzvetan Todorov warned ritual commemoration fails when it merely confirms the negative image of others in the past or its own positive image'. The author also points out how the participation at these experiences distracts people from present urgencies, while giving the illusion of clearing one's conscience.[32]

The 'unscathed' visitors to the NS Documentation Centre may even have been shocked by the Nazi atrocities, but they ignore the present dangers, since they do not threaten the same protagonists and do not take the same forms.[33]

I would like to conclude by returning to Stefan Zweig's characterization of the game of chess, as a deference to the abundant presence of chessboards in medieval prisons and, above all, due to the close similarities he draws regarding the function and meaning of the scribbles themselves in the cell (fig. 4):

> thought that leads nowhere, mathematics that add up to nothing, art without an end product, architecture without substance, and nevertheless demonstrably more durable in its true nature and existence than any books or creative works? Isn't it the only game that belongs to all peoples and all times? And who knows whether God put it on earth to kill boredom, to sharpen the wits or to lift the spirits? Where is its beginning and where its end?[34]

*The author thanks María Luisa Sánchez-Rubio Alfaro (Linguistic Advisory and Translation Service, University of Zaragoza) for helping him with the translation of this text into English.

[31] SONTAG 2003, p. 23–24.
[32] TODOROV 2003, p. 175.
[33] Ibid.
[34] ZWEIG 1983, p. 18.

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Fig. 1 Photograph of the graffiti protection system in the Torre del Trovador in the Aljafería Palace.
Photo: Jorge Jiménez López

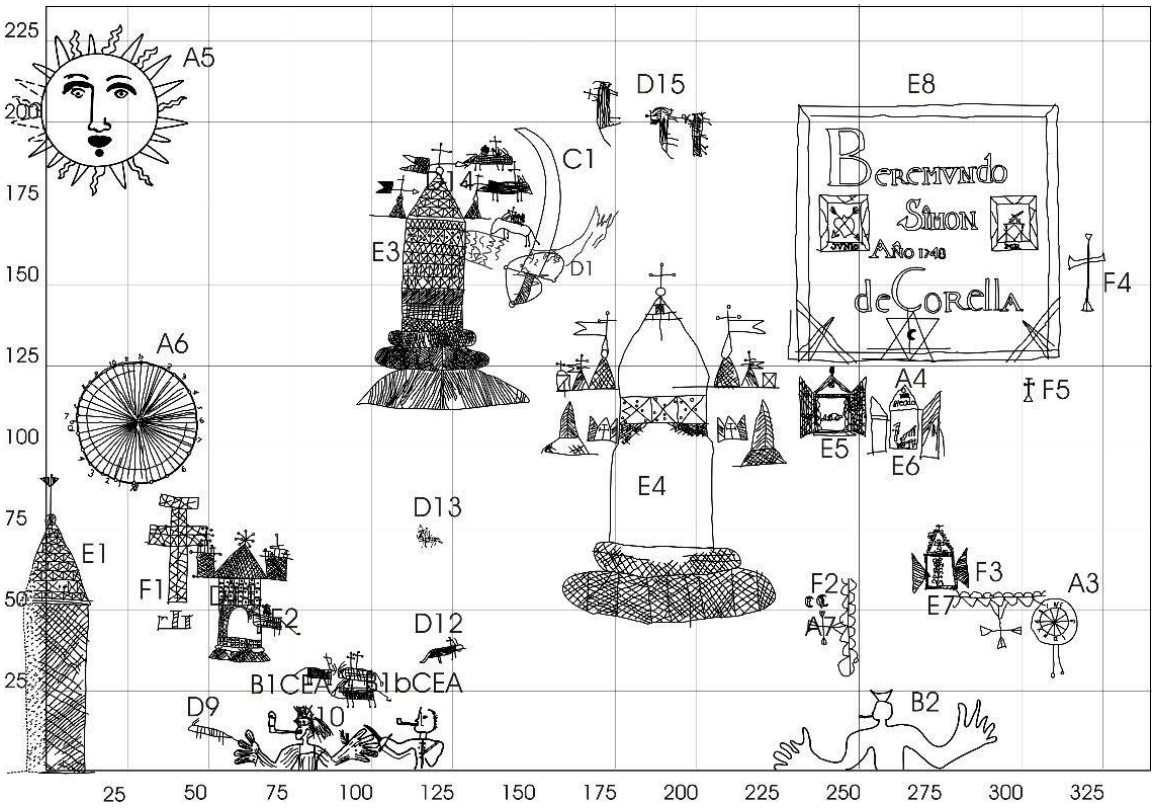

Fig. 2 Graphic reproduction of one of the walls of the prison of the Episcopal Palace of Tarazona.
Photo: José Ángel García Serrano

Fig. 3 Incised drawing representing a bell tower located in the prison of the Episcopal Palace of Tarazona.
Photo: José Ángel García Serrano

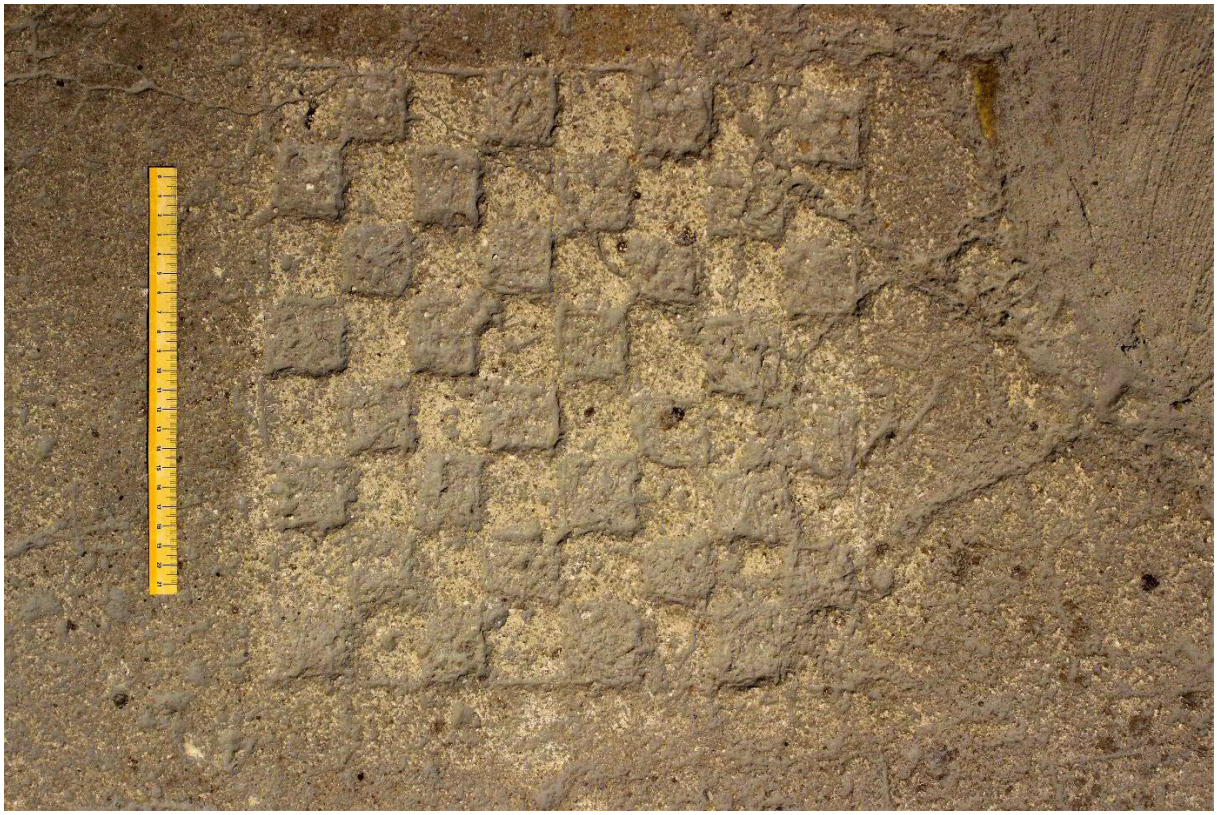

Fig. 4 Chessboard incised into the floor of a room on the third floor of the Troubadour Tower.
Photo: Jorge Jiménez López

Two Art Brut Artists: Agnes Richter and Lorina Bulwer

Inés Colás Biel

Introduction

The female artists of art brut have been marginalized and artistic creation has always been perceived as an eminently masculine practice. However, recent research has gone beyond this framework of study along the lines already proposed in the 1970s by Linda Nochlin in her essay *Why have there been no great women artists?*[1] In that fundamental text for the vindication of the feminine role in art, Nochlin proposed the need of a new discourse in art history. Nowadays art historiography is opening up to new topics and a double path of research is detected: the need to deepen the knowledge of these marginal and excluded artists and to make visible these feminine contributions. This research is a first approach and part of my PhD project about the personal circumstances of two female artists and their contributions to art brut: Agnes Richter (1844–1918) and Lorina Bulwer (1838–1912). They both spent a period of life in various psychiatric hospitals where they found in sewing a means of expression and combined it with the use of words. This article wants to show how the use of sewing to weave a written discourse can be considered an original way they found to express their identities. This is even more significant in a context where this goal is usually achieved through painting, drawing or sculpture.

A Brief Approach to Art Brut

'Art brut' is the term coined by Jean Dubuffet in the 1940s.[2] These art works were characterized by not responding to the canons of official art or having psychiatric patients as their creators. Now, this term has been broadened to include all artistic experiences carried out by adults with no artistic training, in whom an urgent need to give form to their thoughts manifests itself more or less suddenly.[3] These artists do not necessarily seek economic profit or have contact with established artistic institutions and are often self-taught. Their motivation is creation, generally with scrap materials. The study of these artists and their works is undertaken either from the perspective of art as therapy or as an aesthetic manifestation with

[1] NOCHLIN 1971.
[2] THÉVOZ 1995; THÉVOZ 1986; FRANZKE 1976.
[3] GARCÍA 2018.

unique characteristics. In 1972 the term 'Outsider Art' was introduced by Roger Cardinal as a synonym.[4] Within this current, the contributions of Cardinal himself and following up on that Lyle Rexer and Colin Rhodes stand out.[5] To these should be added also the studies of Juan Antonio Ramirez, Angel Gonzalez and Graciela Garcia for the Spanish panorama.[6] Beyond scientific publications on the topic, art brut is the subject of numerous exhibitions such as *New invention: collection of art brut Lausanne*[7] (Museo de Navarra, 1996–1997), *Art Brut: Genius and Delirium*[8] (Círculo de Bellas Artes, Barcelona 2006), *Brut Photo*[9] (Arles, France, 2020) to show the artistic creations to the public. In 2019, the exhibition *Women artists of Art Brut*[10] (Bank Austria Kunstforum, Vienna, 2019) focused exclusively on the role of women, but already in 2018 another show, this time in Madrid, tried to vindicate this protagonism focusing on the artist Jeanne Tripier[11] (La Casa Encendida, Madrid, 2018).

Women Artists: Madness and Art

Statistics show that throughout the nineteenth century more women were admitted to asylums or psychiatric institutions than men. The reasons for internment could be varied and, in many occasions, it was their own husbands or close relatives who favored their admission: prostitution, bad family relationships or an unhappy marriage were sufficient reasons for their confinement. The social structure denied women an active role in society and relegated them to the domestic sphere.[12] Those who did not conform to this social model were accused of being instable or mentally insane 'madwomen' and confined in prisons or psychiatric hospitals. Among these women, seeking independence and forging an autonomous life, it was possible to find important artists such as Séraphine Louis (1864–1942), Camille Claudel (1864–1943), Nahui Olin (1892–1978) or Mary Barnes (1923–2001). These artists were branded as crazy and repressed for expressing their desires and abilities.[13]

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[4] CARDINAL 1972.
[5] CARDINAL 1979; REXER 2005; RHODES 2002.
[6] RAMÍREZ 2006; GONZÁLEZ 2008; GARCÍA 2018.
[7] DURÁN, 1996.
[8] DURÁN 2006.
[9] DECHARME 2019.
[10] BRUGGER, RIEGER, RUDORFER 2019.
[11] HERRERA 2018. As indicated in this catalog, Jeanne Tripier (1869-1944) spent 10 years in the Meuilly sur Marne sanatorium. Her production is characterized by a mixture of image and text, embroidery and crochet fabrics. Her works were revelations produced by her trance states. Her work is in the Collection de l'Art Brut Museum (Lausanne, Switzerland).
[12] RUIZ, JIMÉNEZ, 2003.
[13] DORADO 2021.

The here discussed artists Agnes Richter and Lorina Bulwer were also framed as hysterical women and as vulnerable beings who had to be hidden.

Agnes Richter came from a humble background.[14] Her parents were textile workers and she worked as an embroiderer until she was forced into to the Dalldorf psychiatric asylum (Dresden) where she remained for 26 years.[15] There, she was diagnosed with mental disorders and underwent a 'treatment' that included food deprivation and the administration of drugs. Her most notable work is an asylum jacket that she modified by fitting it to her body and covering it with phrases and symbols (fig. 1). This piece is part of the Prinzhorn collection created by psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn (1886–1933).[16] Richter uses this diary garment to stitch her feelings, thoughts and desires using an old typeface (German Schrift) that makes it difficult to decipher her texts. Some of her phrases have been interpreted: 'I am not great' or 'I plunge headlong into disaster'[17]. This work by Richter is a demonstration of her technical skill and creativity. There are different interpretations of the reasons why Richter decided to customize her jacket, but this piece helps to understand the desperation of not being able to decide about her own life, or the repression she suffered from the authority of the center.

Lorina Bulwer was born in Beccles, Suffolk.[18] She learned needlework as a child and moved with her mother to Great Yarmouth where she helped her mother run a boarding house until her death in 1893. At that time her brother placed her in the town workhouse because he could not afford to support her. Many of her creations are now in the holdings of the Norfolk Museums because they bought her work in an auction. It consists in embroidered canvases realized with fragments of fabric that she pieced together. On these canvases, she stitched scenes and reflections criticizing asylum officials, doctors and judicial authorities. Some of these phrases are: 'For God's sake! Give me my freedom', 'I am an innocent victim'[19]. One of her most important pieces on deposit in this museum is an extremely long letter, embroidered on scraps of fabric that Bulwer sewed together to form a five-meter-long scroll (fig. 2). In this

[14] HORNSTEIN 2009.

[15] 'Memoria, resistencia y bordados locos en la chaqueta de Agnes Richter' in *Lokopedia. Cultura loca y feminismo* [website], <https://www.lalokapedia.com/post/memoria-resistencia-y-bordados-locos-en-la-chaqueta-de-agnes-richter> accessed 25 May 2023.

[16] RÖSKE 2011.

[17] RÖSKE 2014.

[18] SEN 2022.

[19] For an introduction to Lorina Bulwer, her embroidered samplers and activities see <https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/museums/downloads/gressenhall/lorina-lockdown-resources.pdf>, accessed 26 May 2023.

piece, Bulwer weaved her biography in which she often claimed her identity and expressed her desires for freedom.

As mentioned above, Agnes Richter's and Lorina Bulwer's work is based on sewing and embroidery combined with writing.[20] These techniques have always had a long tradition associated with the feminine condition.[21] This situation can be traced through the artistic literature of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era up to contemporary times, as is well demonstrated by the textile section of the Bauhaus School (1919–1933), a workshop to which women who entered to study at that design academy were 'confined'. In short, patriarchal society uses textile work to build an ideal of femininity and to control women's lives.

If the women of the past learned to embroider to demonstrate their status as virtuous and honest people, but also as a creative and liberating space, Richter and Bulwer turned to these same techniques as a means to express their discomfort with the life circumstances and as their loudspeaker. Their works can be considered samples of the human capacity to express oneself even in extremely difficult situations, defying the cultural and artistic conventions of the time and standing out for their originality.

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[21] ÁGREDA 2022.

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fig. 1 Agnes Richter, self-sewn jacket embroidered with autobiographical texts, 1895, Prinzhorn Collection, University Hospital Heidelberg, Inv. 743
Source: https://www.lalokapedia.com

fig. 2 Lorina Bulwer, needlework
Source: Wikipedia Public Domain (Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 License)

From Stone to Virtual. The Wall of NOF4

Virginia Di Bari

I.

Also known as NOF4, Fernando Nannetti (1927–1994) is the artist of a cycle of graffiti, which is now considered a masterpiece of Art Brut.[1] From early childhood he lived in structures of deprivation such as homeless shelters and psychiatric facilities, without any visit from relatives or friends. Over a period of fifteen years, he has been transforming the entire façade (180 meters long and 2 meters high) of the Ferri building at the Psychiatric Hospital in Volterra into a powerful wall of words and drawings. Since institutions of confinement have a character of extreme deprivation, Nannetti used for his art what he had at his disposal. He divided the long wall into pages, like a diary, engraving it with the waistcoat buckle of the hospital uniform. By marking the space, the wall became a heterotopic place[2] where the patient could keep track of days and happenings. Writing on the wall — or better the compulsive act of marking the wall — was his way of sending symbolic messages 'from the telepathic system'[3] to the outside world.

The former blank wall thus became a true theater of expression and creativity, renamed 'The book of stone'.[4] Engaging with the value of memory and community, Aldo Trafeli – the nurse that was personally acquainted with Nannetti – devoted his life to decoding and transcribing the entire graffiti wall as a means of preserving it from deterioration. With the collaboration of the artist Mino Trafeli and the photographer Pier Nello Manoni, who documented the cycle of graffiti page after page, in 1985 the book of stone also became a book of paper.[5] As stated by the nurse, NOF4's desire, through his graffiti, was to become the spokesperson for a segment of society that had neither voice nor visibility.[6] Nannetti aimed to testify, on behalf of all the other patients as well, about the conditions they were experiencing in the psychiatric hospital. To achieve this aim, he developed a narrative that incorporated engraving written and drawn words as essential components of his artistic expression. The writing style

[1] In 2011 the Collection d'Art Brut in Lausanne dedicated an exhibition to Fernando Oreste Nannetti titled 'Nannetti «colonel astral»', see *Nannetti* 2011.
[2] FOUCAULT 1986; FOUCAULT 1994.
[3] TRAFELI 2021, p. 113.
[4] PEIRY 2020.
[5] TRAFELI 2021. For more information about the topic see: QUIRICI, TRAFELI 2022, p. 71.
[6] In 2010 Andrea Trafeli (Aldo's son) founded the non-profit organization 'Inclusione Graffio e Parola' of Volterra (<https://www.inclusionegraffioeparola.it/>) with Claudio Grandoli, Angelo Lippi, Cinzia Ghionzoli, Lelaria Macchioni, Andrea Tamburini, Fedele Ruggeri, Massimiliano Rossi, Manola Del Testa. In 2017 they started guided tours within the area of the former asylum in Volterra to visit Nanetti's graffiti and raise awareness about his story.

employed is boustrophedon, which alternates between progressing in one direction and then reversing course. The initial part of the graffiti is focused on the author, who tries to create an imaginary family genealogy and to find a place for himself in the context of society.[7] It narrates the personal odyssey of Nannetti and his journey towards Ithaca, which is clearly mentioned; it is also a sort of reminiscence of the Genesis with a cosmography, as well as a description of the sky, stars and planets.[8] NOF4 defines himself as an 'astral colonel engineer in telepathic-mental contact with a reality in the sky' that dictated the content he was to transcribe. Nannetti thus became the reporter for this message that 'contains what many books in the history of mankind contain: cosmogonies, wars, mysteries, sorrows, joys, religiosity, fear, love, and death'[9] (fig. 1).

II.

Since 1978, as a result of Basaglia law,[10] the psychiatric hospital in Volterra has been left abandoned, while the graffiti have endured the impact of natural elements and the neglect of supervisory authorities, facing the risk of disappearing over the years. Consequently, efforts were directed towards contemplating strategies for its conservation. Alongside publications, exhibitions, theatrical and cinematic works, the municipality made efforts to preserve the graffiti in 1998. Musealization and accessibility emerged as the main concerns for the non-profit organization *Inclusione Graffio e Parola*. In 2013, they adopted a conservation strategy by removing some parts of Nannetti's graffiti from their original location, and transport them into the museum housed in the former Lombroso Pavilion in Volterra, which functions as both a documentation center and a space for the preserved fragments of the wall.[11]

My proposal addresses the potential for an alternative survival and reinterpretation of these graffiti after their fading by questioning the theme of memory. Is it possible to translate and revive graffiti? Can the wall as temporal layering re-emerge through interactive installations? These questions invite us to focus on the potential of immersive technologies, not only as a depository for preserving, but also for reproducing and reworking memory.

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[7] The family has nothing to do with Nannetti's blood relatives, whom he has never known. The people of this clan are all 'tall, dark-haired, spinach-like, with a y-shaped nose'. See TRAFELI 2021, p. 66.

[8] Translated by the author from TABUCCHI 1986.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Basaglia Law or Law 180 is the Italian Mental Health Act of 1978 on the subject of 'Voluntary and mandatory health checks and treatments'. It was a large reform of the psychiatric system in Italy, contained directives for the closing down of all psychiatric hospitals.

[11] The consolidation and detachment of portions of the graffiti were financed by the Tuscany Region, made possible by the Municipality of Volterra and the non-profit organization *Inclusione Graffio e Parola* of Volterra, and carried out by Cecilia Gabellieri, Cristina Ginesi, Cristiana Dabelli, and Sandro Sinigatti.

Studio Azzurro[12] has been investigating the poetic and expressive potential of new media technologies for over four decades. It is precisely this creative collective that imagined a museum operation based on the idea of an immersive museology, by creating the possibility for the aesthetic experience to be embodied. An early visual exploration of Nannetti's wall in the former asylum of Volterra[13] was initiated by the group in 1985. The Museo Laboratorio della Mente[14] was created by Studio Azzurro in 2000 within the former psychiatric hospital of Santa Maria della Pietà in Rome, where Nannetti had been hospitalized.[15] The project is developed around a long wall that cuts across almost the entire exhibition space, which is divided into seven areas dedicated to the perception of mental illness. Studio Azzurro decided to recreate in natural size a considerable part of Nannetti's graffiti. The reproduction of the wall is transparent, so that it could be transformed into a screen for video-projections. By listening to video-interviews and interact with witnesses, visitors are invited to reflect on the paths of social exclusion and reconsider their attitude towards diversity (fig. 2).

Considered one of the most attractive spaces for transmedia education and communication in terms of museographic innovation,[16] this non-traditional museum setting encourages the active engagement from audience, as touch is the only means to activate projections. Art experimentation through interactivity has the potential to break down the walls of museums, inviting us to immerse ourselves in and to rediscover art as experience.[17] Following this approach, Studio Azzurro developed a sensitive environment: an immersive, multimedia installation that engages visitors in a permanent oscillation between physical presence and virtual elements.

III.

Madness makes itself visible and audible through Museo Laboratorio della Mente and Nannetti's graffiti, allowing us to face, see and hear such insanity 'from within'.[18] As soon as the experience of mental illness is mediated and made accessible as a social space, the borders between 'normal' and 'insane' become blurred and are thus able to generate social and political changes.

[12] Studio Azzurro is a Milan artistic group co-founded in 1982 by Fabio Cirifino, Paolo Rosa, and Leonardo Sangiorgi: [website] <https://www.studioazzurro.com/>, accessed 15 July 2023.
[13] On this topic Studio Azzurro realized the movie *L'Osservatorio nucleare del signor Nanof* [website], <https://www.studioazzurro.com/opere/losservatorio-nucleare-del-signor-nanof/>, accessed 15 July 2023.
[14] Museo della Mente [website], <https://www.museodellamente.it/>, accessed 15 July 2023.
[15] Nannetti stayed at the psychiatric hospital of Santa Maria della Pietà in Rome from 21 May 1956 to 12 September 1958.
[16] *Santa Maria della Pietà* 2014.
[17] DEWEY 2005.
[18] MITCHELL 2012.

Recent theories have explored the profound interactions between materiality and immateriality. For instance, the Material Engagement Theory[19] mainly provides a way to describe and study that middle space where brain body and culture are intertwined. Malafouris has pioneered the interactions between human cognition and material culture: human thinking – he underlines – is better described as *thinging*. We think *with* and *through* things, not simply *about* things.[20] In the case of Nannetti's carved graffiti, material act and physical effort are ways to immerse in the creation process, to be touched by the wall and actively touch the wall.[21] Freeing both his mind and his hand, Nannetti chose the gesture over the speech.[22] This artistic operation aligns with the recognized central role of the hand in the evolution of the mind. According to Malafouris, he fully embodied the concept of *thinking as thinging.* Nannetti's graphic sign on the wall becomes both the silent accomplice and the loud witness of his verbal thought. These graffiti can be interpreted as a progressive appropriation of a space: from a restricted and coercive space to a personal one, in view of an awareness of the surrounding environment. Nannetti rediscovered the founding act of human civilization[23] through his outsider art, by transforming a wall into a useful epistemic and social device, a space of resilience and recognition.

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[19] MALAFOURIS 2019a; MALAFOURIS 2019b.

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[21] See Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology in HUSSERL 2009; MERLEAU-PONTY 1968.

[22] See LEROI-GOURHAN 2018.

[23] WARBURG 2009, pp. 276–277.

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Fig. 1 A fragment of Nannetti's graffiti, Ferri Pavillion, Psychiatric Hospital, Volterra.
Photo: Pier Nello Manoni in TRAFELI 2021, p. 47

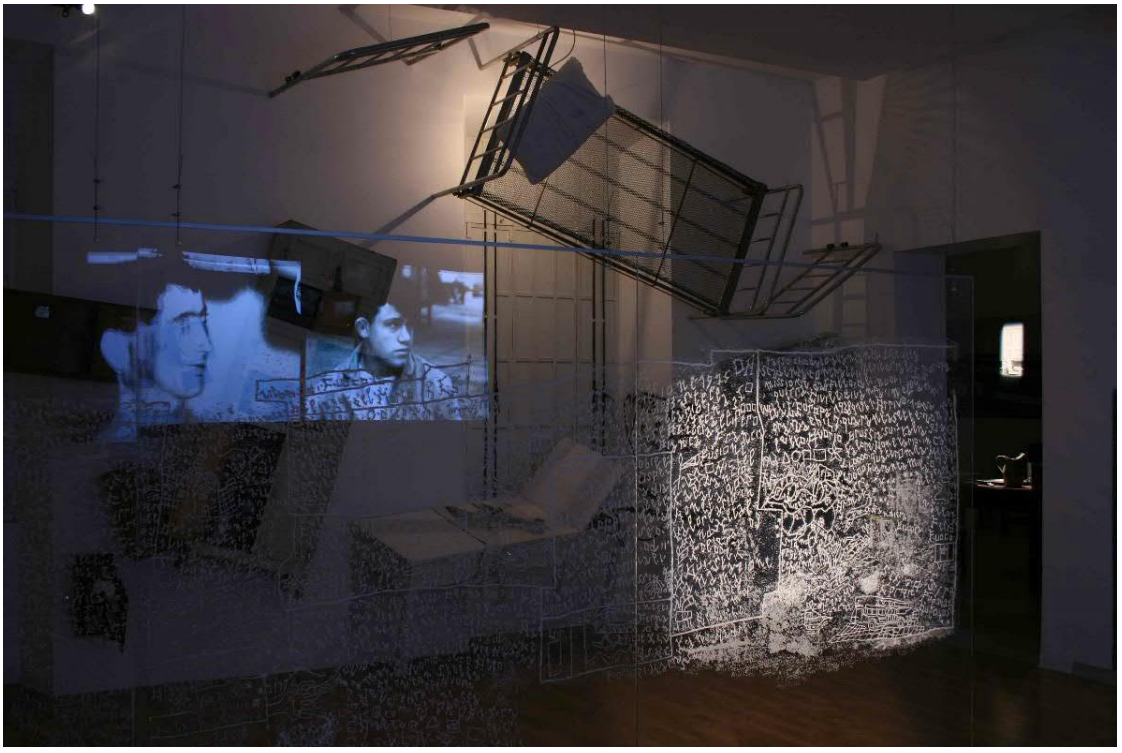

Fig. 2 Exhibition Space, Museo Laboratorio della Mente, Rome. ©Studio Azzurro Produzioni

Illustrations for *Faules* (1946–48): The Echo of Reclusion in the Graphic Work of Pierrette Gargallo

María Foradada Pina

The participation of women in the contemporary art scene has been overshadowed by patriarchal dominance in culture, intensified after the war conflicts during the first half of the 20th century in Europe.[1] In 1941, Pierrette Gargallo de Anguera (1922–2019), artist and daughter of Pablo Gargallo, [2] one of the most important sculptors of the 20th century avant-garde, was imprisoned, together with her mother Magali Tartanson, in the French women's internment camp of Rieucròs (Lozere). This episode would be decisive not only in her personal life, but also in her work, as can be observed in the illustrations that she made for the book *Faules*.[3] The goal of this research is to give importance to Pierrette's creative side, which has been completely unknown until now.

From the perspective of art history and studies on contemporary artists, it has been decided to analyze both the life experience in prison of the creator and the repercussions on specific examples of her work. The sources used are Pierrette's direct testimonies in her interviews,[4] epistolary documents, and the two editions of the book *Faules* illustrated by Pierrette Gargallo between 1946 and 1948. The analysis of this material will permit to understand how her reclusion affected her artistic production specifically in the graphic work in that book.[5]

The sudden death of her father Pablo Gargallo in 1934 marked a new stage in the lives of Pierrette and her mother. In addition to this, in 1936 the Spanish Civil War broke out. They had to move to Céret, a town in the south of France where they had spent many of their family holidays.

[1] LOMBA 2019.

[2] Pierrette and her mother undertook the compilation and dissemination of her father's artistic work, organising numerous international exhibitions. In 1985 the Pablo Gargallo monographic Museum in Zaragoza was inaugurated thanks to the management and efforts of the sculptor's daughter, Pierrette Gargallo.

[3] The first edition was published in 1946 (SOLDEVILA 1946). A children's edition was also published later (SOLDEVILA 1948).

[4] CREMADES 2003. Dr. Juan Antonio Cremades (lawyer of the Royal and Illustrious Lawyers' Association of Zaragoza) dedicated his acceptance speech as Full Member for the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Luis of Zaragoza to Pierrette Gargallo. This speech included an interview with the artist and was published as a monograph.

[5] These private epistolary documents of the artist are unpublished and located in the Documentation Centre of the Pablo Gargallo Museum in Zaragoza and will be studied and included in further steps of the research.

Magali and Pierrette offered shelter to many of their friends and family members, who, like them, were against Franco's coup and they were forced to cross the border. [6] This situation was aggravated when, a few years later, in 1941, during the Second World War, Pierrette, at the age of 19, suffered one of the harshest episodes of repression of her life: her imprisonment, together with her mother, in the French women's internment camp of Rieucròs in Lozere, south of France (fig. 1). The reason for their imprisonment was the report made by a Vichy government infiltrator in the town of Céret, who declared that Pierrette and Magali were protecting Spanish exiles and the Jewish art dealer Van Leer. For this reason, both were confined for several months in subhuman conditions, but thanks to the artist's statements, it is known that they were protected by the superintendent of the internment camp because of their creative skills.[7] As a result, their files were reviewed and finally, on 25 December 1941, they regained their freedom and moved to Barcelona.[8]

In close contact with the cultural environment of this city, Pierrette's professional career was boosted between 1940 and 1959. In fact, she began a highly suggestive project with the illustration of the book *Faules*, invited by the author, the Catalonian historian Ferran Soldevila,[9] also exiled in the south of France in 1939, where he had met Pierrette. *Faules* was published the first time in 1946 in Barcelona as a compilation of sixteen fables from different sources that offered the reader guidelines for ethical behaviour.[10] For this book Pierrette Gargallo produced sixteen etchings, in line with the work of some illustrators of Jean de La Fontaine's *Fables*, such as Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard (known as Grandville) and Gustave Doré, as well as other references of Spanish women illustrators of the 20th century such as Lola Anglada's illustrations for Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, published in 1930.[11] Nevertheless, she used a very classical technique, with these prints the artist demonstrated a personality and a richness of graphic nuances that distinguish her from previous artists.

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[6] Pierrette's commitment to those persecuted by fascism was corroborated when she commented in an interview that her mother 'Magali and a friend went in 1939 to the south of France to take Spaniards out of the concentration camps and provide them with money and medicines', translated by the author from CREMADES 2003, p. 43.

[7] According to Pierrette's memories, one of the Spanish prisoners informed the superintendent that she was an artist. She managed to give drawing lessons to his son, and thus obtained his protection. See ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ferran Soldevilla (1894–1971) is considered one of the key figures in 20th century Catalan historiography. He was a novelist, poet and playwright as well as a historian. After the war, he went into exile in France until 1943, when he returned to Barcelona. For the editions of *Faules* see footnote n. 3.

[10] One of the reference sources is Aesop's Fables. The first compilation of Aesop's Fables was made for Demetrio de Falero in the IV century BCE.

[11] LA FONTAINE 1838 and 1885; CARROLL 1972.

When analysing the illustrations, it is striking that, after her imprisonment in Rieucròs, Pierrette Gargallo reveals a special sensitivity and empathy towards some of the characters in *Faules* who suffer experiences similar to her own as in *El Boc i la Guineu*, (The Goat and the Fox, fig. 2a). In this fable, the goat finds a fox in a well and the fox, invites it down to drink water in order to be helped to get out of the well. As soon as the fox is freed it leaves the goat trapped in the well. Selfishness overcomes altruistic generosity, as happened to Pierrette and Magali when they helped those exiled and persecuted by fascism, and ended up in the Rieucros internment camp. There are also strong echoes of her personal experiences in *La Mort i el Lleyataire* (Death and the Lumberjack, fig. 2b). In fact, this fable concludes with a moral that emphasizes the importance of resistance in the most adverse circumstances, with an evident connection with her suffering experience in prison. Through scenes of confinement and death her work can be considered an example of social denunciation through art.

We must therefore consider that Pierrette and Ferran's aim in realizing this project was twofold. Firstly, to produce a poetic-aesthetic creation, but also stimulate an ethical reflexion considering the crucial historical moment they both suffered.[12] However, the censorship of the Franco regime considered it contrary to its principles, the book was censored and its sale suspended.[13]

This contribution presents a specific period in the life of Pierrette Gargallo —an artist hitherto known only for the management of the work of her father, Pablo Gargallo— that shows how, through suggestive artistic projects such as the illustrations for the book Faules, she succeeded in inserting herself into the artistic, social and professional world of Spain in the 1940s.[14]

* This research is part of my PhD thesis titled 'Mujeres ilustradoras en la escena artística y su relación con Francia e Italia durante la primera mitad del siglo XX', developed at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zaragoza. The research has been carried out within the Vestigium research group (H19_23R), funded by the Department of Science, University and Knowledge Society of the Government of Aragon (2023-2025).

[12] As the author of *Faules* wrote in his 1940 memories: 'I sometimes imagine a Book of Advice. Advice (rules of life) dictated by my experience. Perhaps it would be useful to someone. We will wait until we are old, and the wealth of our experiences has increased', translated by the author from PUJOL 2000.

[13] A copy of the original edition is in the Documentation Centre of the Pablo Gargallo Museum in Zaragoza.

[14] It is important to note that, although she began her academic training at the École des Arts Decoratifs of Paris in 1938, she developed the first part of her professional career from 1940 onwards, in close contact with the cultural sphere of Barcelona, where she carried out her first commissions and exhibitions. The information regarding Pierrette's artistic career will be addressed in a future article.

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Fig. 1 Pierrette and Magali in the Rieucròs internment camp, Lozère, 1941–42.
Anguera Gargallo Family Donation. Museo Pablo Gargallo, Zaragoza

Fig. 2a Pierrette Gargallo, *El Boc i la Guineu* from SOLDEVILA 1948, p. 7.

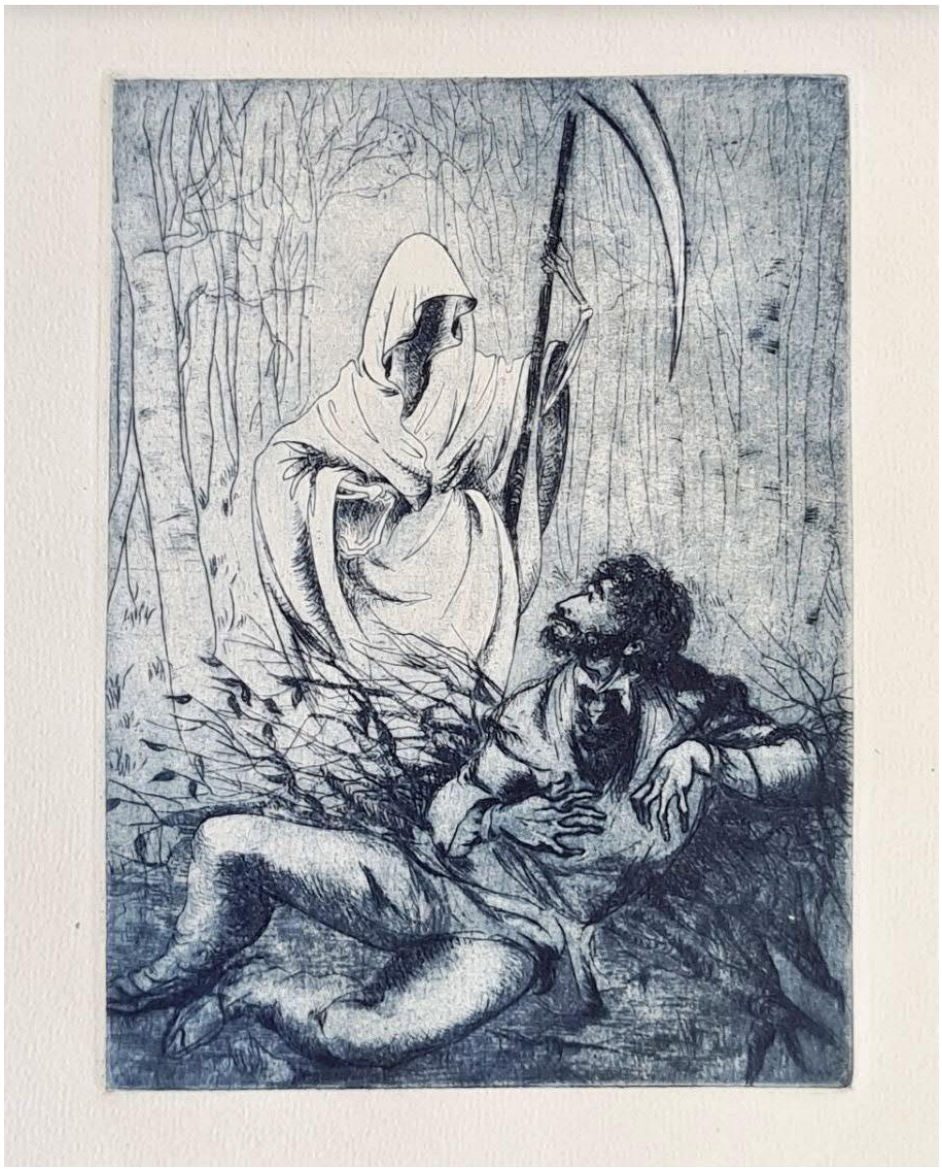

Fig. 2b Pierrette Gargallo, *La Mort i el Lleyataire*, etching stamp of the edition SOLDEVILA 1946.

Embodied Art in the Context of Imprisonment

Valentina Grispo

Aesthetic experience is a pervasive human trait that impacts daily life, self and interpersonal relationships, as human beings are not always satisfied with the prosaic relationship they have with the real on a daily basis. This has led humans to recreate the world by representing it or transfiguring it with the help of imagination. Making or enjoying art is a possible strategy for escaping reality and sometimes, this assumes a compensatory role in uncomfortable conditions. The latter can happen especially in contexts like prisons, that contribute to a less stable sense of reality, because the certainties one had about the outside world suddenly fall away.[1] This article intends to address the bodily and cognitive dimensions of the act of making graffiti and wall drawings in the context of imprisonment. On the one hand, it will focus on the anthropological dimension and its neurobiological substrates, and on the other, on the relationship between the body-brain system and the external world during the act of creating. Art projects are carried out in a large number of correctional institutions, where imprisoned people get the opportunity to create their own works of art supported by professional artists. According to many studies, this kind of projects has beneficial effects on people in prison by promoting empathy and a more sympathetic emotional insight.[2] It would be reductive to conceive art activities in prisons as well as in psychiatric rehabilitation centers simply as a creative way to spend time. It is more useful and interesting to bring the aesthetic experience of making art in such contexts into the process of symbolization,[3] starting from a neurobiological perspective.[4] This process, as neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese points out, keeps intact its bodily bonds, not only because the body is the instrument of the production of symbols, but also because it is the main instrument of reception. This allows to reflect on the symbolic-aesthetic level of human existence including the dimension of the 'bodily presence',[5]

[1] See FREDERIQUE, SEXTON 2014.
[2] See CLEMENTS 2004; GUSSAK 2019; BARAK 2017.
[3] The artistic symbolic expression is understood as a mediated form of intersubjectivity where the symbolic object acts as a mediator between those who made it and those who use it, see GALLESE 2014, p. 54.
[4] The neurobiological approach to the symbolic expressiveness of human beings is not limited to investigate the relationship between the concepts with which we describe it and the brain areas that are activated during the application of such concepts. This approach studies also how, from the brain-body system in its situated relations, the symbolic expressiveness arises and is received, see GALLESE 2014, p.50.
[5] GALLESE 2014, pp. 49–67.

which imply that it is not possible to separate the aesthetic experience from our daily physical experience of reality.

In contexts of imprisonment, an example of this connection could be represented by graffiti and drawings made by prisoners on the walls of the cells, and of which some of the oldest testimonies are attested in the Inquisition prisons of Palazzo Chiaramonte in Palermo. There, the relationship between embodiment and media is visible, the walls become 'artificial bodies' or, using a Merlin Donald expression, 'prostheses' in which prisoner's memories are embodied.[6] Considering this last aspect, many of the drawings in the prisons of Palazzo Chiaramonte, such as the reproductions of the geographical maps of Sicily or of the commercial routes in the Mediterranean, can be interpreted as a result of a process of externalization of the prisoners' memory, with the intent to keep track. Moreover, these walls can also be considered themselves 'artificial bodies' since they have been engraved and drawn with the use of tools and makeshift materials, including body fluids, such as blood or saliva, with which prisoners used to make colors.

Regarding the anthropological dimension of drawing on walls or engraving them, as the first attested form of artistic expression of the *homo sapiens*, opens a reflection on cognitive archaeology that looks at the embodied dimension of this specific aesthetic experience. Particularly, the theoretical frame to which I refer to, is the anthropology of anxiety by Michele Cometa whose main idea is that the human being is a failing being, physically and psychologically, primarily because of its instinctual deficits.[7] This condition causes helplessness and uncertainty regarding the consciousness of death, future and dangers coming from the environment. To contrast the anxiety resulting from this condition and regain control over reality, humans have developed two main strategies: compensation and exoneration. Those two elements have exponentially refined human ability to create objects, rituals, and works of art, through a process that Ellen Dissanayake has defined with the notion of 'making special'.[8] According to Michele Cometa's studies on the exonerating and compensating function of art in the evolution of *homo sapiens*, it seems that humans, in the act of painting and engraving, have tried to give meaning to their experiences, and granting themselves a respite from the reality through artification. The effect of a successful strategy of exoneration from reality is fulfilled through the 'decoupling', a series of operations that

[6] DONALD 1991.
[7] COMETA 2018, pp. 303–315.
[8] DISSANAYAKE 1999, pp. 27–46.

double and disconnect the reality, and that are enabled by what Vittorio Gallese calls 'liberated embodied simulation'. The theory of the embodied simulation is connected to the discovery of mirror neurons which activate the same parts of the brain that preside over the real execution of an action, even when the action is performed by others. [9] This kind of simulation can also happen when we imagine an action or a perception. Gallese defines 'liberated' the simulation during the aesthetic experience because it allows to temporarily suspend our grip on the world. Moreover, it helps to release new energies that can be used to have a more vivid experience than reality itself, at the same time it stimulates the process of the re-elaboration of memory and imagination.[10] The preconditions for the 'liberated embodied simulation' coincide with forms of production and reception of art that produce what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls 'flow': a condition which reduces self-awareness and even self-perception.[11] Therefore, according to this perspective, the effectiveness of art practices could be measured in the ability to activate the 'feeling of the body'. This empowerment, achieved through the exemption from the reality that the aesthetic experience produces, triggers processes of re-enactment, repetition and rewriting of the memory.[12] Thus, this mechanism could represent for prisoners a strategy to preserve the memory of the outer world and to control the uncertain reality, caused by the experience of imprisonment. In this sense, throughout art, imprisoned people try to give meaning to their presence in that place, elaborating their experiences and memories with the help of imagination. Furthermore, creating art in prison, allows prisoners to have a respite from the surrounding reality, and it contributes to build a familiar space manifesting their presence and, at the same time, creating a condition for sharing experiences.

[9] GALLESE 2011, pp. 196–204.
[10] GALLESE, WOJCIEHOWSKI 2011, pp. 12–16.
[11] CSIKSZENTMIHALYI 2014.
[12] COMETA 2018, pp. 345–347.

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Painting the Flag of Israel on Prison Walls: A Mural Painting by an Asylum Seeker in Detention

Hamutal Sadan

This contribution explores asylum seekers' mural art in prison, providing a glimpse into their personal experiences and shedding light on the policies imposed on them by the State of Israel. In particular, it presents the case of Tsegay Berhe, an Eritrean asylum seeker who painted murals in the Holot Detention Center in Israel, which operated between 2013 to 2018. By examining his painting of the Flag of Israel, I demonstrate how he appropriated and deconstructed the emblem, stripping it of its symbolic historical, national, and religious connotations while infusing it with new meaning.[1] Through a comparative analysis of photographic documentation captured by the artist himself in 2016 and by a photographer in 2018, following the closure of Holot, the painting is interpreted as a metaphor for the refugee regime in Israel, that not only impedes the integration of asylum seekers but also creates an environment that encourages their departure to third countries by confining them in Holot.[2]

Eritrean Asylum seekers started arriving in Israel in late 2005. They fled a country characterized by the absence of democratic elections and a civilian judiciary. Eritrea imposes mandatory military service, which extends indefinitely and involves harsh working conditions akin to slave labor. Such conditions, accompanied by numerous human rights violations, amount to crimes against humanity.

[1] In 2019, I conducted a semi-structured interview with Tsegay Berhe, aiming to gain insights into his firsthand experience of creating mural art while in detention. The interview, conducted in both Hebrew and English, was recorded with Berhe's consent and simultaneously transcribed.

[2] The Holot Detention Center, which is managed by the Israel Prison Service (IPS), required special permission for documenting the mural paintings. After many efforts, I obtained permission from the IPS, and in 2018, accompanied by a professional photographer, entered Holot. The photographer captured the pictures of the mural paintings, and documented over 50 paintings, including those on the interior and exterior walls of the facility. Additionally, I asked Tsegay Berhe to share the photos he had taken with his mobile phone while detained in Holot in 2016, showcasing the murals he had created.

Eritreans who attempt to evade military service are deemed traitors and, if apprehended, are subjected to torture and, in some cases, execution.[3] Israel was one of the initial signatories and ratifiers of the 1951 'Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee' and its 1967 Protocol. However, the country has yet to integrate the regulations outlined in the Convention into its domestic legislation. Over the course of the last twenty years, asylum seekers in Israel have faced difficulties stemming from governmental policies that aim to protect the Jewish identity of the state.[4] To impede the integration of asylum seekers, Israel avoids granting refugee status, which would provide them with social and medical benefits.[5] An example of such legislation was the establishment of the Holot Detention Center in 2013 in the middle of the Negev Desert in the south, which housed male asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan. Holot served as a site of liminality because it was situated outside of Israeli society, both geographically and socially.[6] Its objective was to push asylum seekers out of Israel, as stated by Eli Yishai, the former Interior Minister of Israel, who aimed to incarcerate them and render their lives 'miserable' so they would leave Israel 'voluntarily.'[7]

Graffiti art in correctional institutions has been extensively studied, including its use by detainees.[8] Graffiti art in prisons serves as a suppressed subtext, challenging the 'official story' of the site as presented by the authorities.[9] It also serves as a valuable visual tool for examining the inscriptions left by asylum

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[3] Human Rights Council, 'Detailed Findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea,' 8 June 2016. Eritrea is one of the largest per capita 'producers' of asylum seekers in the world, with over 511,900 people leaving the country by the end of 2021. On this, see: CONNELL 2018, pp. 215–237; United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees (UNHCR), 'Global Trends Forced Displacement In 2021,' Copenhagen, 2022, *UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency* [website], <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022>, accessed 23 June 2023.

[4] Among these policies are, for example, the 'Infiltration Law' (2006–2021), the Holot Detention Center (2013–2018), the planned deportation to Rwanda and Uganda (2018-2019), the 'Deposit Law' (2017–2020), the lack of decision about asylum applications, and the Procedure for Determining Conditions Regarding Geographical Demarcation and Occupation with the Licenses of Asylum Seekers and Infiltrators (2022).

[5] BERMAN 2018; KALIR 2015, pp. 580–598; ROZEN, ABBO, PASKAY 2020.

[6] SKJOLDAGER-NIELSEN, EDELMAN 2014.

[7] EFRAIM, 'Yishai: Next Phase – Arresting Eritrean, Sudanese Migrants,' in *YNET News* [website], 16 August 2012, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4269540,00.html>, accessed 12 May 2023.

[8] JOHNSON 2009; WILSON 2008 ; UZUREAU et al. 2022.

[9] WILSON 2008.

seekers during their journey of seeking refuge, offering insights into their emotions and experiences.[10]

Tsegay (Hagos) Berhe was born in 1980 in Eritrea. In 2009, he defected from the army to evade the dictatorial regime, fleeing by foot to Sudan, and from there he continued north to Israel. After entering Israel in 2010, he was incarcerated in Saharonim Prison for a month. After his release, he found work and an apartment. However, in December 2015, he was detained in Holot for one year. Over the course of his detention, Berhe painted on the inner walls of the detainees' saloon dozens of mural paintings, depicting landscapes, animals in nature, and scenes of Eritrean family life. Seeing Berhe's talent, the wing manager requested Berhe to paint the flag of Israel on the outside wall of the facility.[11] Berhe decided to depict the flag as a vase, embellishing it with a vibrant bouquet of flowers. Doing so, I argue, he appropriated the emblem's aesthetic form and deconstructed it from its historical, national, and religious meanings, expressing his own creative freedom and agency. This painting was first photographed by Berhe himself in 2016, when the colors were strong and bright (fig. 1); and then again in 2018 by the photographer Miriam Alster after Holot was closed, by which point the colors had faded in the desert sun (fig. 2).

I suggest a metaphoric interpretation of the difference between these two versions. I regard the painting as signifying the asylum seekers' hope that they would find shelter in Israel. In my interpretation, the vase adorned with the Israeli flag symbolizes the State of Israel, while the diverse and varied flowers contained within represent the asylum seekers. When flowers are detached from their roots and merely placed in a vase with water, they eventually wither away. Similarly, asylum seekers in Israel are not afforded the opportunity to attain permanent status or establish a sense of belonging. In fact, more than half of the

[10] UZUREAU et al.,2002, p. 174.

[11] The flag of Israel was adopted in 1948 following the establishment of the State of Israel. The basic design recalls the Tallith (טַלִּית), the Jewish prayer shawl, which is white with black or blue stripes. The symbol in the center represents the Star of David (Magen David, מָגֵן דָּוִד) which was used on the 'yellow patch', an identification badge the Jewish prisoners in concentration camps were required to wear during the Holocaust. Since the Second World War, the flag of Israel has come to symbolize, in the Israeli collective consciousness, the purpose of the State of Israel as a homeland and refuge for Jewish individuals.

asylum seekers in Israel have departed for other destinations. The irony of this situation is not lost on us: the asylum seeker is requested to paint the flag of the State that confines him within the walls of a detention center. However, even within these challenging circumstances, signs of resistance and individual initiative emerge.

To conclude, incarcerated for no wrongdoing, many detainees succumbed to despair and chose to leave for third countries in search of better lives. However, others found resilience, like Berhe, who used the extended detention periods as an opportunity to create art. He said he painted on the walls to bring beauty and serenity to his fellow detainees. Therefore, his act of painting can be viewed as providing them with hope and strength to resist the Interior Minister's objective of coercing them to leave Israel.

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Fig. 1 Tsegay Berhe, Untitled (the Flag of Israel with Flowers), 2016, gouache on wall, Holot detention center, Israel.
Photo: artist, 2016.

Fig. 2 Tsegay Berhe, Untitled (the Flag of Israel with Flowers), 2016, gouache on wall, Holot detention center, Israel.
Photo: Miriam Alster, 2018.

Silent Instrument: Carceral Themes in the Work of Jannis Kounellis

Saskia Verlaan

In the summer of 2016, the famed Greek-Italian artist Jannis Kounellis visited the Casa di reclusione di Milano-Opera, a maximum-security facility located in the outskirts of Milan and the largest of Italy's prisons. During his visit, Kounellis was particularly drawn to one site within the complex: the instrument workshop, commonly known as a lutherie. Founded in 2012 as a charitable initiative, the Opera prison lutherie trains incarcerated individuals in the venerable tradition of making string instruments.[1] The program offers its participants a creative and social outlet within the context of incarceration as well as a potential career path for post-prison life.

One of Kounellis's companions the day of the visit, the poet Arnoldo Mosca Mondadori, recalls that upon entering the workshop, the artist mused, 'I too played the violin as a child'.[2] In fact, Kounellis's interest in music and instruments extended far beyond his childhood and had long featured in his art. His 1972 work *To Invent on the Spot*, for instance, consisted of a violinist performing fragments of Igor Stravinsky's score for the ballet *Pulcinella* while a ballerina danced improvised choreography. During his tour of the lutherie, Kounellis talked with two of its incarcerated members: Erjugen Meta and Nicola Petrillo. Later that summer, the men would send the artist a gift of a pair of violins they had made, each representing hundreds of hours of skilled labor. Kounellis had already expressed a desire to create a work 'together with' inmates from Opera prison, and the violins now offered an opportunity.[3] Had he simply wished to credit the artistry of the incarcerated men who made the instruments, Kounellis hypothetically might have used the violins, unaltered, as a prop in a work such as *To Invent on the Spot* or one of the several compositions featuring intact instruments that he made throughout his career. Instead, Kounellis performed brutal interventions on one of the violins that stripped it of its very purpose: to be played. He replaced the violin's strings with barbed wire and enclosed it in a forbidding iron case, equal parts coffin and prison cell. While Kounellis claimed that 'it is for them that I do this', it is unclear if he sought Meta and Petrillo's

[1] 'Laboratorio di liuteria in carcere', *Casa dello Spirito e delle Arti* [website], <https://casaspiritoarti.it/it/progetti/laboratorio-di-liuteria-in-carcere>, accessed 12 October 2022.
[2] MOSCA MONDADORI 2017, p. 14.
[3] Ibid.

input on his alterations to the instrument they had made.[4] The work is commonly attributed only to Kounellis, raising intriguing and, up to this point, unexamined questions about how authorship is assigned in such cases. Critical responses to the work have oddly tended to gloss over the unsettling violence that permeates the violin and Kounellis's role in it, but I would argue that this feature of the work is central to its meaning, a reading that is borne out when we consider the object in context with other works from Kounellis's career.[5] This unsparing artwork complicates the redemptive narrative implied in the educational model of the prison workshop. Although the phenomenon is understudied, the existing research on art programs in prison settings has suggested their positive impact on the social and emotional well-being of incarcerated individuals.[6] Such programs are often discussed in terms of their redemptive potential. For example, the project website for the lutherie at the Milan Opera prison affirms the workshop as a site 'where not only *precious violins* are created, but *life and meaning are given* to the time of imprisonment and the foundations are built for social and professional reintegration'.[7] Redemption is classified here as skilled artistry, gainful labor, and the provision of a social good in the form of a materially and culturally valuable instrument tied to a venerated tradition.

Far from appealing to this redemptive model, however, Kounellis's modifications—the threatening barbed wire and severe, rack-like steel box—debase the violin and introduce a sense of uncanny discomfort. Viewers might wince when they imagine plucking one its barbed 'strings.' In its altered, inoperative, and estranged state, the violin allies itself with Surrealist artworks such as Méret Oppenheim's, *Object* (1936), a fur-lined teacup, or Salvador Dalí's *Lobster Telephone* (1938), hybrid objects of inutility that fulfilled the Surrealist writer and theorist Andre Breton's edict to 'bewilder sensation'.[8] Another Surrealist precedent suggests itself, as well, in Man Ray's iconic photograph, *Le Violon d'Ingres* (1924), in which a nude

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[4] Ibid.
[5] 'Alla Galleria Alberoni il violino con il filo spinato di Jannis Kounellis', *Il Piacenza* [website], <https://www.ilpiacenza.it/eventi/dischiusure-violino-jannis-kounellis-galleria-alberoni-marzo-aprile-maggio-2019.html>, accessed 14 February 2023; FRANGI Giuseppe, 'Kounellis, un violino con filo spinato,' Vita [website], 11 December 2017, < https://www.vita.it/kounellis-un-violino-con-filo-spinato/>, accessed 12 March 2023; 'Il violino di Kounellis', *Zerynthia - RAM Radioartemobile* [website], 22 November 2017 <https://www.radioartemobile.it/en/project/linizio-del-viaggio-del-violino-di-kounellis-2/>, accessed 12 March 2023; 'Il viaggio del violino di Kounellis', *Casa dello Spirito e delle Arti* [website], <https://casaspiritoarti.it/it/progetti/il-viaggio-del-violino-di-kounellis>, accessed 12 March 2023; PARISI 2019.
[6] LITTMAN, SLIVA 2020, pp. 54–82.
[7] 'Laboratorio di liuteria in carcere', *Casa dello Spirito e delle Arti* [website], <https://casaspiritoarti.it/it/progetti/laboratorio-di-liuteria-in-carcere>, accessed 12 October 2022.
[8] BRETON 1969, p. 263.

female figure appears from the back, with two f-holes painted on her body so that it resembles a violin. This association underscores the corporeal humanity implied in Kounellis's violin. The body of the instrument, a stand-in for that of the prisoner, is ultimately subject to forces outside itself, ones that limit movement and expression.

That prison life can be violent, dehumanizing, and degrading seems an obvious point, but Kounellis's savagery against the violin, the very manifestation of redemption in that setting, tacitly extends the critique to the lutherie and the premise of that redemption itself. He reminds us, as Michel Foucault did in his discussion of 'docile bodies', that sites of education can also be agents of discipline and control.[9] According to Foucault, 'a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved'.[10] Such concerns were explored within the GAP program, as within a lecture by Sofia Ciuffoletti.[11] In a discussion on the limits placed on free expression within Italian prisons, Ciuffoletti observed that, within such institutions, art can function an agent of social control. For instance, access to programs and materials can be granted or withheld according to any number of factors. This reality complicates idealized perceptions of incarcerated art making as a fully open arena of creative expression.

This willingness to confront unsettling aspects in cherished ideals surfaced time and again in Kounellis's output. In 1969, he initiated a decades-long series of works that involved blocked apertures within the architectural spaces of his exhibitions. These physical impediments introduced carceral themes into his work through their palpable sense of confinement. It is vital to consider the implications of the materials Kounellis used and the spaces he blocked. Often, he deployed objects in his barricades—stones resembling rustic Greek masonry, sculpted busts in the classical style, hardcover books—that evoked the building blocks, real and figurative, behind certain idealized notions of Western culture, civilization, and enlightenment.[12] Their transformation into agents of obstruction suggest how the weight of this patrimony can itself become an impediment to forward progress.

Just as Kounellis's choice of materials for these interventions was significant, so too were the locations. The spaces he walled off were often otherwise usable galleries, implying that the museum itself can function as a site of imprisonment and control. In a related vein, Kounellis's early champion and long-time chronicler, Germano Celant, suggests that the rifts he built

[9] FOUCAULT 1991, pp. 135–141; 170–7.
[10] Ibid., p. 136.
[11] 'Symbols, Art and Resistance in Prison. A Legal-Anthropological Perspective', Presentation at the Sixth Intensive Study Week of the GAP Project in Florence (27 March 2023).
[12] JACOB, MCEVILLEY 1986, p. 87.

between the outside world and the space of the gallery function as Kounellis's 'opposition to and negation of the religiosity ascribed to art' and his 'impatience with its places of worship'.[13] The blockaded doors and silenced violin incorporate shared mechanisms of denial, preventing the audience straightforward pleasures in favor of a more nuanced consideration of the interactions between art, knowledge, and power.

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Photo: Chiara Scategni

3 Uncomfortable Heritage and its Conservation

Dealing with Difficult Heritage: A Challenge for the 21st Century

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What Do We Understand by Dissonant Heritage?

Dissonant heritage has a unique personality compared to the objects that have traditionally been considered cultural heritage and that we tend to associate with works of art of great value. Uncomfortable heritage includes constructions such as barracks, bunkers, cemeteries, monuments, ruins, war landscapes and prisons; buildings and places that should be preserved because they have a high historical value, although sometimes some of them have no artistic relevance or material value whatsoever. In fact, they can clearly be considered as anti-monuments.[1] All these objects, sites and places are the testimonies of episodes of conflict like wars and dictatorships, and their conservation poses a great challenge to the society nowadays. The absence of the values that we traditionally associate with cultural heritage constitutes one of the first obstacles to identify uncomfortable heritage, but there is also an added circumstance that hinders its recognition by society: places related to dissonant heritage are associated with ideologies that are unsustainable today in the context of modern democratic societies, a circumstance that causes states to reject their conservation. Therefore, the main problem is how to treat these cultural assets from a heritage point of view without extolling the ideologies that built them (i.e. how to preserve, how to restore, how to use and how to present them to society). The fear felt by states and society is that, at a time when populism and the extreme right are on the rise, preserving the traces of the dictatorships of the last century could lead to a revival of the autocratic ideology that gave rise to them.

[1] Anti-monumentalism is a tendency in contemporary art that intentionally challenges every aspect of traditional public monuments in order to negate sacred imposed values, rejecting the the notion of a monument as an elitist emblem of power. In this essay, this term is used to contrast the monumentality of the official architecture of Nazism versus the anti-monumentality of the concentration camps. In relation to anti monuments, we also find another category: counter monuments, that seek to disrupt dominant historical narratives, providing a voice for those whose stories have been marginalized or excluded, and enhancing awareness and understanding of the historical events that are being commemorated. One of these counter monuments is *The Empty Library* (1995), that memorializes the burning of over 20,000 books written by predominately Jewish authors by the Nazis in the Bebelplatz in Berlin, Germany on May 10, 1933. The counter monuments try to solve the disagreement that some monuments produce because they support ideologies or historical persons or facts that are difficult to accept nowadays. According to some experts, counter monuments are a way to add historical context without removing what already exist (the monuments erected decades even centuries ago). In this sense, counter monument could change the narrative of history including new perspectives according the present perception of controversial historical facts. On this see KRZYZANOWSKA 2016.

An important issue as a starting point to approach the analysis of this heritage is to consider the terminology we employ in relation to it. Moreover, the plurality of words: *dissonant, difficult,* or *uncomfortable heritage*, *sites of memory and sites of discord, sites of hurtful memory, sites of historical significance, places of painful memory, places with difficult pasts, negative heritage*, among others, highlight its ambiguity and somehow the difficulty of defining it in a single way. We can sustain that in principle there is no uniformity in the use of these terms and it is up to each author to use one or the other. It is also significant to note when the terminology starts being used and from what perspective or in what context it does emerge.

The term *dissonant heritage* began to be applied in the mid-1990s in the field of cultural geography studies. The English geographers John Tunbridge and Gregory Ashworth were the first to use it[2], in reference to the discomfort linked to certain buildings and places due to the emotional impact they inevitably exert on the visitor. A paradigmatic example of this new heritage category is the Auschwitz–Birkenau concentration and extermination camp.[3] Soon this concept acquired great currency among specialists, as shown by the numerous studies from various disciplines: archaeology,[4] anthropology,[5] contemporary history,[6] art history,[7] and other connected fields to heritage studies,[8] gaining special relevance in Germany, where after the reunification of the country in 1989, a need arose to critically examine recent history in order to decide what to do with the controversial material remains of Nazism and Communism. In this context, uncomfortable heritage becomes a crucial element that connects the past with the present, because it suggests issues of great relevance to contemporary society and offers the possibility of raising far-reaching topics and asking questions about the past that shed light on the conflicts of the present. In this regard, the Australian archaeologist and anthropologist Lynn Meskell considers that *uncomfortable* heritage, which she calls *negative* heritage, 'occupies a dual role: it can be mobilized for positive didactic purposes (e.g., Auschwitz, Hiroshima, District Six) or alternatively be erased if such places cannot be culturally rehabilitated and thus resist incorporation into the national imaginary (e.g.,

[2] TUNBRIDGE, ASHWORTH 1996.
[3] Auschwitz was declared a State Museum in 1947, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979, and in 1999 it was renamed the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.
[4] MOSHENSKA 2015; STURDY 2015.
[5] AUGÉ 2004; MACDONALD 2008.
[6] NÚÑEZ 2019.
[7] GARCÍA 2015; DÖLF-BONEKAMPER 2002a.
[8] LOGAN, REEVES 2009.

Nazi and Soviet statues and architecture)'.[9] Meskell defines *negative* heritage as 'a conflictual site that becomes the repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary',[10] for example she quotes the Twin Towers Memorial (The World Trade Centre, NY) or the destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan. It is precisely here where one of the key elements linked to this heritage appears: memory, a subject associated to postmodernity that has been of great interest for decades to such an extent that some scholars are beginning to consider this cult of the past paralyzing, with the risk that we would not be able to forget and move forward.[11] Several experts have already warned about this situation, among them the Scottish writer and archaeologist Neal Ascherson: 'North America and Europe are obsessed with the cult of memory and the nationalization of the past into 'heritage' as never before. We have forgotten how to forget'.[12] The American intellectual David Rieff argues in two revealing essays,[13] that referring to collective memory today, is part of an overestimated politically correct thinking, which ends up leading more to rancour than to conciliation. He also states that what guarantees the health of societies and individuals is not their ability to remember, but their ability to finally forget. In this context of debate between preservation and oblivion, between memory and history, the German art historian Gabi Dölf-Bonekamper holds the opinion that these places should be preserved for different reasons. First of all, because they are the most obvious 'proof against the denial of the events that we want to be remembered'.[14] In addition, she underlines that:

> They are precious witnesses to history. They contain answers to questions that we may not have considered but that our children might. As three-dimensional objects, they are more complex than a written source, although less easy to read. Also, the *genius loci* – the spirit of the site –, hard to describe but doubtless perceptible to the open minded, makes people feel that they share past experiences, as if there was a direct access to history.[15]

How to Manage Difficult Heritage?

The conservation and management of uncomfortable heritage, testimony of atrocious events, have been done until this moment in very different ways, some of which truly opposed each other. Regarding what happened in Europe, although many interesting examples in other

[9] MESKELL 2002, p. 558.
[10] Ibid.
[11] BOYM 2001.
[12] ASCHERSON 2004, p. 130.
[13] RIEFF 2011; RIEFF 2016.
[14] DÖLF-BONEKAMPER 2002a, p. 4.
[15] Ibid.

continents could be mentioned (e.g. in Colombia, Brazil, Argentina or Chile), a number of cases have been selected here as an illustration of the diversity of attitudes towards this heritage: from the neglect or destruction to their musealization, including the possibilities of functional recycling.

(a) Destruction, or the Human Desire to Forget

'Negative heritage will undoubtedly be elided in a deliberate policy of collective amnesia.'[16] In this sense, the most radical option is to make these testimony sites disappear. This has happened in many countries, and also occurred in Germany after the Second World War, when many Nazi buildings were demolished in order to face up to the future. As Dölf-Bonekamper describes 'with post-war reconstruction, the topography of numerous towns changed, and many places were lost as were traces of local responsibility'.[17] Perhaps the human desire to erase the painful past is understandable, but at other times it is the political will that cancels them. Among the many telling examples there is the demolition of the Carabanchel Prison, located in Madrid, one of the most important vestiges of the Franco Dictatorship. Its disappearance is the result of property speculation and the desire (especially on behalf of right-wing political parties) to erase an uncomfortable reminder of Spanish recent past. This prison was the main and singular example of the Franco Dictatorship's sites of repression and torture.[18] General Franco ordered its construction in 1939 in order to respond to the urgent need to repress Spanish society, as he had decided to imprison the regime's opponents and enemies. Thus, Carabanchel became a metaphor for Spanish society, as the country turned into an enormous prison where freedom of expression or movement had been cancelled. This historic building is a place of conflict and an outstanding example of uncomfortable heritage in Spain. It had therefore a high value: historically and as a place of memory, where political and common prisoners were incarcerated, including many homosexuals who were also persecuted by the dictatorship. In this same building, resistance to the Francoregime and the origins of democracy were forged (here were imprisoned politicians who later worked in the construction of a new regime, such as the leader of the Communist Party Santiago Carrillo or Marcelino Camacho, one of the most important trade union leader). Carabanchel is also remarkable for its architectural typology: this gigantic prison was one of the latest examples

[16] MESKELL 2002, p. 566.
[17] DÖLF-BONEKAMPER 2002a, p. 4.
[18] For more information on the history of this prison see ORTIZ 2013.

(it was opened in 1944) following the panopticon model (fig. 1). The building included specific places of great interest such as the unique and extraordinary concrete dome located in the centre of the naves, the largest in Spain and probably dimensionally unique in the world, in addition to the usual elements (galleries arranged in a star-shaped plan). When the prison was closed in 1988, after 55 years in operation, the pressure of social and political organizations to preserve the historical building was not enough to save it and the authorities, carried out its demolition, deliberately and covertly in October 2008.[19] Various social groups had proposed several uses for it such as centre of memory and space for emerging artists. Unfortunately, these demands were not met and the Carabanchel prison, one of the most significant examples of uncomfortable heritage in Spain has been definitively lost, although its historical and artistic value. Worse still, in the building's scarce remains, an immigrant reception site has been installed, turning it again into a place of confinement and repression.

(b) Neglect, a Singular Position

Another possibility, which can also be framed within this desire for collective amnesia in the face of uncomfortable heritage, is passivity, abandonment, non-intervention, waiting for time to erode the remains of wars until they disappear. This is what happened to several towns destroyed in the Spanish Civil War, such as Belchite in Aragón.[20] In this case the town was left in ruins by Franco, following its destruction in the summer of 1937. The violence experienced reached such a level that Belchite (one of the most destroyed places and with more human casualties not only in Spain), has become from today's perspective emblematic of the fury of the Spanish Civil War, and by extension of the disasters of the European wars of the 20th century. Belchite was for the dictatorship a symbol of resistance against the Republican Army, inspiring Franco to leave the remains of the town as a testimony of the heroic courage of the insurrectionists, and to build a new community next to it.[21] So, the destroyed town ended up becoming a gigantic place of remembrance, a war memorial used to demonstrate the power of evil, the destructive nature of the Republic in a Manichean and simplistic version of Spanish history: the good guys, the Nationalists, *versus* the bad guys, the Republicans (figs. 2a–2b).

After the dictator's death in 1975 and the end of the dictatorship with the arrival of the new

[19] The Government, the Community of Madrid and the City Council of the capital were at that time governed by the right-wing Popular Party.
[20] HERNÁNDEZ 2020.
[21] CASTÁN, HERNÁNDEZ 2022.

age of democracy in 1978, the ruins of Belchite were left to fall into oblivion. People could not continue revering a monument to the victors of the civil war and therefore had no use for the ruins. The legacy is difficult to digest in the present. Given the circumstances, and despite the historical and artistic value of some of the monuments of the old town that still remain standing (the *Mudejar* tower, the arches at the entrance to the town, some baroque churches such as San Agustin and San Rafael), the old Belchite was not legally protected until 2002 when it was declared asset of cultural interest (Bien de Interés Cultural) until 2002. The site's lack of maintenance (except for some occasional interventions), has not stopped tourism from visiting the ruins, in this case driven by the Local Council which, in March 2013, ringed the town with a fence to prevent uncontrolled visits and organized a guided tour service.

Today old Belchite has become a successful and well-frequented place of memory that attracts a considerable number of visitors who come to the town to see first-hand the vestiges of the Spanish Civil War, in the wake of the growing popularity of war tourism to such places as the French coast where the Battle of Normandy took place. This case study, similar to other destroyed and abandoned *pueblos* in Spain such as Roden or Corbera d'Ebre,[22] poses a challenge to Spanish society: to preserve these remains and construct a narrative that is not solely the vision of those who won the war. In this regard, the historian Ángel Viñas believes that this is due to the fact that 'In Germany there was de-Nazification, but here [in Spain] there was no de-Francoization. That's the key'.[23]

(c) Conservation and Musealization, Transforming Painful Sites into Places to Build Citizenship

As it concerns the opposite case, the recovery and preservation of these eloquent remnants of history are actions that help to build citizenship, which is typical of cultured and advanced societies. One of the most interesting and recent examples is the *Museo do Aljube Resistência e Liberdade* dedicated to the victims of the Salazar Dictatorship (1926–1974). This museum was opened in Lisbon in 2015, and it was promoted by Lisbon City Council,[24] with the intent to express the city's gratitude to the people who sacrificed their lives fighting for freedom and democracy. A place for the creation of a responsible citizenship showing the fight against the silence and social complicity with the dictatorship that ruled Portugal for half a century. Another remarkable aspect of this public institution is its willingness to contribute to the fight

[22] BITRIÁN 2017.
[23] Translated by the author from an interview with the historian Ángel Viñas, in Junquera Natalia, 'La justicia de Franco bebía de la Inquisición. Conversaciones a la contra. Ángel Viñas historiador', *El País*, 14 June 2022.
[24] CALDEIRA 2017; FARINHA 2017.

against social amnesia, especially at a time when a 'continuous present' dominates, aiming to forget the past and facilitate the return to past forms of domination. The Aljube Museum is both a historical museum and a musealized site, because it is located in an old building (*Cadeia do Aljube*) that was historically a jail since the time of the Romans, being used as an ecclesiastical prison until 1833 and a women's prison from 1845 onwards. After 1928, it became a detention centre for political prisoners, where opponents of Salazar's regime were tortured. Therefore, converting this place of memory, a perfect example of uncomfortable heritage, into a museum that commemorates the suffering of the people imprisoned there could be consider as a suitable project where container and content are harmoniously related to each other (fig. 3). The transformation of this former prison into a museum has been executed with great care. Some of the original spaces have been preserved, such as the cells, while the rest of the building has been adapted to show the history of the dictatorship and the struggle for democracy through different museographic resources. In addition, there is a room dedicated to temporary exhibitions related to the struggle for human rights in Portugal and its colonies, and a documentation centre and digital archive that collects, processes and makes available content on the subjects of resistance to the dictatorship, imprisonment, torture and exile. In terms of content, the museum has been built on the basis of documentary information from the police and the courts, but to a large extent on the memories of the 30,000 political prisoners who passed through this place, some of whom are still alive, as the prison was closed in 1965. Thanks to this extensive material heritage (the documents preserved) and immaterial heritage (the testimonies of the prisoners), the museum provides a reflection on what it meant to be imprisoned, including the action and repression performed by the police and the courts, the long stays in custody and the use of torture. The recovery of the memory of the democratic struggle in Portugal does not end at the Aljube Museum, because in the next years this museum will be completed with the opening of the National Museum of Resistance and Freedom in the fortress of Peniche,[25] and will become the largest museum centre dedicated to the theme of political repression and political resistance in the Estado Novo between 1926 and 1974.

[25] GORI, TORREGGIANI 2018.

(d) Conservation and Commemoration, the Need for Remembrance

Another attitude towards uncomfortable heritage is commemoration, the transformation of these testimonies into places of remembrance. One of the most outstanding examples is Oradour-sur-Glane, an ordinary village 30 kilometres from Limoges, France, which eventually became a national symbol, inscribed into the category of the *Lieux de Memoire,* the places and objects in which French national memory is embodied, defined by Pierre Nora.[26] A terrible massacre of the civilian population in the local church (among them 240 women and 231 children) took place in this small French village on June 10, 1944, during a German SS division's retreat, in the context of the Battle of Normandy. After the tragedy, it was decided to leave the ruins of the village as they were[27] (figs. 4a–4b).

In 1946, the ruins of Oradour became a monument, a true icon of the suffering of the country that was used politically by President Charles de Gaulle, who ordered the construction of a new town in the 1950s, leaving the remains of the original village as a memorial space for the victims. The political objective at the time was to reinforce French nationalism. Oradour-sur-Glane could almost be considered an echo of what was done in Belchite, although the differences in the ideologies that support both cases are quite remarkable.

In 1999, the *Centre de la Mémoire d'Orador-sur-Glane Village Martyr* was inaugurated by President Jacques Chirac, and with it, the narrative and interpretation of the site changed markedly.[28] Oradour became a global symbol of violence against civilians, and it is described as a temple of remembrance to the universal victims of war, sacralizing a kind of secular cult within a clearly state matter. Today this perception has changed because a new interpretation is added to this reading: the village attracts massive numbers of visitors thanks to the flourishing of a kind of 'war tourism', a recent phenomenon that has transformed the perception of the conflict: 'Tourism has succeeded mourning'. [29] But in this case some conflicts are also avoided, because the memorial circumvented thorny details such as the connivance of the Vichy Regime and part of the French population with the Nazis, the division and problems of the French resistance, or the pain felt in 1953 due to the amnesty granted to some of the French perpetrators of the Oradour massacre, which has provoked critics and dissenting voices from those who are not satisfied with the construction of this official

[26] NORA 1984.
[27] STONE 2004.
[28] FAURE 2010.
[29] BOURSIER 2005.

narrative.

A project of a similar nature, although materially very different, and of great spatial and symbolic value is the *Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer*,[30] an urban park with a length of 1,4 kilometres located in Bernauer Strasse. The memorial, inaugurated on 13 August 1998 and completed in the following years, recovered the history of this *Lieux de memoire*, including the remembrance of those who attempted to cross the border in different ways. This memorial included a monument called *Window of Remembrance* with the names and pictures of the deceased (132 civilians died at the Berlin Wall), a documentation centre and also a small church, the Chapel of Reconciliation, built on the exact spot where the Reconciliation Church had once stood. This memorial is truly relevant for the citizens of Berlin because it materializes a difficult episode in their recent history (the division of the city into two parts), but also for visitors, because it represents a model of making history visible in a public space in an inclusive way. In fact, it brings together the diverse voices of both those who jumped the fence and the policemen who defended it. It could also be considered as an act of symbolic restitution of the names and images of the fallen, a sort of poetic justice. At the same time the Berlin Wall Memorial visually recaptures the route of the wall, destroyed after its fall in 1989, except for a few sections such as the famous East Side Gallery, turned into a rather banal tourist spot where people go just to get photos.

(e) Reuse, or How to Erase the Painful History

Finally, there is another attitude towards dissonant heritage which is to change the history of these unique monuments by introducing new uses for them, for instance the recycling of Nazi bunkers and submarine bases for cultural uses. Nazism left, among other traces, a massive defensive line that runs along the Atlanticshore from the Spanish-French border, on the Basque coast, to the North Cape in Norway. Because of its size, its impact on the surrounding landscape, the variety of remains linked to this military architecture, its state of preservation and the historical events linked to it, this Atlantic wall is recognized as one of the best examples of archaeological war landscapes.[31] Constituted by a succession of places and constructions such as submarine bases, bunkers, cemeteries, interpretation centres and thematic museums linked to this defensive structure, this defensive system extending

[30] DÖLF-BONEKAMPER 2002B; RISTIC 2016.
[31] BASSANELLI, POSTIGLIONE 2011.

throughout northern Europe is a huge open-air memorial site. As a part of it, an impressive submarine base in Bordeaux, France, has been converted recently into a space for artistic exhibitions[32] (fig. 5). *Bassins des Lumières* is a project launched in 2018 by the French company *Culturespaces* that manages museums and art centres, specialized in the creation of immersive digital exhibitions. In Bordeaux, the show consists of a visual projection during which images from works of art are shown as montages in homage to contemporary artists such as Van Gogh, Yves Klein and the French Impressionists. The images are adapted to the large dimensions of the space, and they are reflected in the water as well. The result is a visual experience of great impact for the spectator that might however cancel out or make us forget the drama of the place. Some controversial aspects of its construction including the history of those who erected this monstrous building, such as Spanish republican prisoners, or the connivance of the French construction companies that made a fortune from the work, are not present in the narrative of this place. This use in particular may trivialize the historic building, especially if we consider that, for French historians, all these submarine bases partake of the 'modern cult to monuments' defined by Alois Riegl.[33] They are non-intentional monuments in the sense that those who built them did not conceive the bunkers as such, it is we who nowadays turn them into monuments. At the same time, they have relevant historical and artistic values, which testify to the creative capacity of the military architecture at that moment, and most important, their mnemonic function is strong because they evoke very painful destructive episodes during the Second World War. This phenomenon of reusing this military typology has happened not only in France, but also in Austria and Germany, where bunkers in Vienna, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Berlin have been transformed into houses, art galleries and musical studios.[34] It is precisely in Berlin where one of the most famous examples is located: the Boros Collection,[35] opened in 2008. The original building is a Nazi bunker built in 1942 by the architect Karlz Bonatz in Reinhardstrasse, Mitte. From 1945 onwards the bunker, under the control of GDR government, experienced different uses: prison, warehouse, and after the fall of the wall, techno music discotheque. A new episode in its history began in 2003, when the publicist Christian Boros, owner of an important collection of contemporary art, bought the building to transform it into a private museum and built a

[32] *Bordeaux Bacalan* 2022.
[33] RIEGL 1903.
[34] HERNÁNDEZ 2015.
[35] CASPER 2009.

luxury house (a Miesian modern loft design) in the attic over the original construction (fig. 6). After the refurbishment to transform the bunker into an exhibition space, which involved a substantial transformation of its interior,[36] the Boros Collection became a relevant new tourist attraction in Berlin, widely renowned in mass media, and gained significant professional recognition (in 2008 it was awarded the *Architecture Award for Concrete* and it was also nominated for the Mies van der Rohe Prize in 2009). This kind of intervention, however, can cause some unease among visitors, who may wonder whether a new use could so radically erase the memory of the place. From this perspective, the historian Liane Lefraive poses the following question when she analyzes the reuse of some Nazi bunkers in the Austrian capital: 'Can a Nazi building be recycled as an art centre without banalizing history, particularly in a city like Vienna, which is so famously amnesic about its Nazi past?'[37] In the same direction analyzing these bunkers, the German architect Markus Berger adds: 'Can these towers be converted to a new use or are they in a category of their own that is intrinsically unconvertible?'.[38] The truth is that the visit to Boros Collection can provoke disquiet about the transformation of a bunker flooded with memory into a fashionable attraction advertised in design magazines. A forbidding historical building where the traces of history have been used as the setting for art exhibitions, but whose documentary value as a palimpsest of German history from the 1940s to now, is erased. Furthermore, the Boros Collection has created a new trend, and other bunkers in Berlin have now been converted into art spaces, e.g. the Feuerle Collection, opened in 2016.[39]

Conclusion: What Future Is There for Dissonant Heritage?

The above examples show that there is a wide variety of attitudes towards sites of uncomfortable heritage, and that this kind of heritage is still a battleground today. No longer war sites, but places for new buildings with living spaces. All these examples show, with their contradictions, the possibility of giving new life to dissonant heritage. Perhaps the line between trivialisation and respect is to preserve its documentary value as much as possible respecting the material traces of history deposited in these places and including the memories

[36] The project was carried out by the Berlin studio Realarchitektur (Jean Casper, Petra Peterson and Andrew Strickland). On this see KAPPINGLER 2008.
[37] LEFAIVRE 2001, p. 62.
[38] BERGER 2011, p. 60.
[39] PAWSON 2016.

of the people linked to them in the narrative offered to visitors. Preserving these singular monuments becomes a challenge because they have to be passed on to the future generations without trivializing them as containers for the consumption by a few cultural elites. In this sense, new uses that erase the memories and the historical and cultural values of these monuments should be avoided. Perhaps the introduction of contemporary art and other artistic and cultural practices offers some hope, as far as this contamination does not mean the radical transformation of the architectonic structures.

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Fig. 1 Aerial View of Carabanchel Prison, Madrid, Spain, 1968. Photo: ABC newspaper Archive

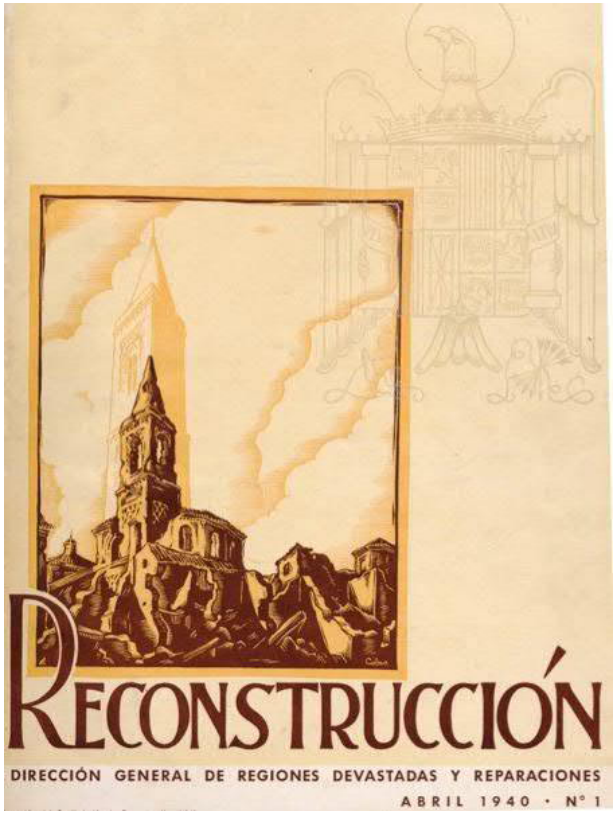

Fig. 2a Front cover of *Reconstrucción* (1940) with the ruins of Belchite, Zaragoza, Spain.

Fig. 2b Partial view of the ruins (Church of St. Martin from Tours), Belchite, Zaragoza, Spain. Photo: Ascensión Hernández Martínez

Fig. 3 Installation of the rooms, Museo do Aljube Resistência e Liberdade, Lisbon, Portugal.
Photo: Ascensión Hernández Martínez

Fig. 4a Ruins of Oradour-sur-Glane, Limoges, France

Fig. 4b Installation with the portraits of the murdered in the massacre, Centre de la Mémoire d'Orador-sur-Glane, Limoges, France. Photo: Ascensión Hernández Martínez

Fig. 5 External view and interior of the former submarine base Bassins de Lumières, Bordeaux, France.
Photos: Ascensión Hernández Martínez


Fig. 6 Former bunker housing the Boros Collection, Berlin, Germany.
Photo: Ascensión Hernández Martínez

The Historical Prisons of Florence. From Center to Periphery

Christine Kleiter, Federica Testa

Walking through the streets of modern day Florence, a rather invisible part of the urban history of the Renaissance capital is often overlooked: the remains of its historical prisons. While some structures have survived, others have been re-appropriated in various forms and proper prison buildings have been replaced through modern urban planning. This article seeks to give space to those historical prisons and their various destinies while arguing for their historical importance in the city and its urban planning. It considers Le Stinche, the Bargello, Le Murate, Santa Teresa and Santa Verdiana. Whereas the medieval city housed prisons and their inmates in various facilities right in the city center, a marginalization of prisons can be observed from the 18th century onwards, a time when personalities such as Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794) and Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) were re-thinking of penology and Florence was becoming a 'modern' town.[1] In 1983, the opening of the prison in Sollicciano, a Florentine neighborhood in the western periphery of the city, represented a further step in this marginalization process.

Historically, Florentine prisons were adaptions of other, preexisting spaces like vaults—called the Burelle—under the ruins of the Roman amphitheater (today's Palazzo Vecchio) and towers, such as the Torre della Pagliazza (used as female prison) or the room in the tower of the Palazzo della Podestà[2], both of which were used as prison spaces for short periods.[3] The increasing number of inmates and the need for more space, however, forced the city to find new structures for imprisonment. Italian Renaissance humanists vividly discussed the needs of prisoners: Antonio di Pietro Averlino, known as Filarete (ca. 1400–1469), wrote about two different types of prisons in his treatise on architecture, both of which seemed to be freely inspired by medieval Florentine prison

[1] On modern penology see GELTNER 2008a, p. 10; JOHNSTON 2000, pp. 42–66.

[2] A former private tower of the Boscoli family incorporated into the Palazzo and later called Volognana.

[3] Many privately-owned spaces such as towers or entire buildings were rented by the city if needed to accommodate prisoners for a short period. The tower of Palazzo Vecchio, called L'alberghettino, served as prison for Cosimo Il Vecchio de' Medici in 1433 and Girolamo Savonarola in 1498. See GELTNER 2008b, p. 12; WOLFGANG 1960, pp. 154, 164.

architecture: firstly, a small prison located in the vaults of a city palace, such as the Florentine Burelle, and secondly, a larger prison close to other governmental buildings.[4] Another Florentine humanist and architect, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), discussed ancient prison architectures in his treatise *De re aedificatoria* (written in 1452, but published for the first time in 1485), in which Alberti argues for better inmate conditions in the future with proper latrines, fireplaces, and direct access to light. He also emphasizes the idea of placing the prison in the very center of the town, surrounded by high walls and watch towers.[5] The descriptions of prison buildings by Filarete and Alberti evoke similarities to the prison spaces called Le Stinche and the Palazzo del Podestà, today known as the Bargello. These were the two main historical spaces that manifested Florentine power and the threat of reclusion in the emerging center of the medieval city. Whereas Le Stinche was one of the first independently built prisons of the Middle Ages designed to detain people, the Palazzo del Podestà was an embedded structure, a building with multiple purposes that changed over time.[6]

Le Stinche was erected at the end of the 13th century close to Santa Croce.[7] It was demolished in 1833 in order to embellish the city center and house places of public amusement: the Philarmonic, and later the Teatro Verdi.[8] Today, only the street name 'Isola delle Stinche' gives a hint to the prior carceral structure. The former prison was built on land which had been confiscated by the Florentines from the Uberti family, a member of which, Farinata degli Uberti, had been involved in a conspiracy with Sienese Ghibellines against Florence, held responsible for the defeat of the Florentine Guelfs at the battle of Montaperti in 1260.[9] The plot was therefore notorious and seemed a more than suitable suite on which to build a prison, making a powerful example out of the land. The jail was authorized in 1297 and its first prisoners were registered from 1304 on.[10] The castle, a prominent fortress for exiled Ghibellines, was eventually razed by Guelf forces, its soldiers captured and put inside the new prison space in 1304, making

[4] Filarete wrote about these prisons while describing the ideal city of *Sforzinda*, see FILARETE 1965, book 10. The marginalization of prisons is already present in Filarete's text when, later in this treatise, he collocates a penal colony outside the city, on this see also JOHNSTON 2000, pp. 29–30.
[5] ALBERTI 1988, book 5, chap. 13. On this see also JOHNSTON 2000, p. 29.
[6] For an overview on historic prison structures see GELTNER 2008a, especially pp. 29–30.
[7] Basic research on Le Stinche and its famous prisoners can be found in WOLFGANG 1960 and the literature cited therein.
[8] See on this FRATICELLI 1834, p. 34.
[9] WOLFGANG 1960, p. 155.
[10] WOLFGANG 1960, p. 155–156.

them the first inmates of the new prison which was baptized after another infamous place of resistance.[11] The trapezoid compound had a massive external wall without openings and was surrounded by a moat; hence its name: 'Island'. It consisted of various sections overseen by a control tower and included cells for political and common criminals, debtors, juvenile detainees, and a women's ward as well as an infirmary and a facility for the insane (fig. 1).[12] The prison was mainly used for debtors and criminals who violated the law. Many of its prisoners were illustrious members of Florentine society, such as the artist Cennino Cennini, imprisoned for debts; the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, incarcerated for sodomy; and the philosopher Niccolò Macchiavelli, sentenced for conspiracy.[13] It needs to be stressed that despite its high outer walls, prisoners could exit the prison quite freely. Indeed, food had to be provided from the city and so a stable contact between inmates and family members or lay fraternities was common. Prison and city were therefore well connected. Le Stinche thus epitomizes a late medieval development: the creation of marginal institutions such as prisons inside the city center.[14]

As mentioned above, the tower of the Palazzo del Podestà was used as partial prison from an early stage.[15] The construction of the palace began in 1254 and housed the judicial headquarters of the city and its archives.[16] The palace's fortified walls and its tower symbolized the strength of Florentine government and its judicial system.[17] Soon, more space was needed for short period-prisoners or debtors and parts of the first floor were adapted as cells.[18] Only in 1574, under the Medicean Ducal reign, was the palace transformed officially into the prison known as Bargello, named after the police chief of Florence, who lived in the building.[19] Prison cells were added, additional walls, partitions, and floors created. The walls of the tower were used to depict criminals and

[11] The name most probably goes back to the Ghibelline Cavalcanti castle Le Stinche (engl. 'shins', 'crests') on the top of a mountain in the Tuscan hills near Greve in Chianti, see WOLFGANG 1960, p. 156–158.
[12] See GELTNER 2008a, p. 18; id. 2008b, p. 13; MARGHERINI, BIOTTI, 1992, p. 37. For a reconstruction of the prison see GELTNER 2008a, pp. 122–124.
[13] See GELTNER 2008a; WOLFGANG 1960.
[14] GELTNER 2008b, pp. 21, 23.
[15] The Podestà was the highest magistrate of the Florence City Council and he worked together with the municipality and the residents to judge criminal cases. He was thought to represent the qualities of good judgment.
[16] TERRY 2010, p. 840; regarding the history of the building see PAATZ 1930.
[17] TERRY 2010, p. 841.
[18] See DAVIDSOHN 1962, vol. IV, pp. 616–617.
[19] BAROCCHI, GAETA BERTELÀ 1985, p. 3.

famous artists such as Sandro Botticelli or Andrea del Sarto were asked to execute this Renaissance 'billboard for criminals'.[20] This artistic commission has its roots in a widespread tradition in medieval Italian cities. Since the second half of the 13th century, it was common practice in certain areas of the city and on the most important public buildings, to paint the image of people hanging upside down, in grotesque and offensive poses. Rebels and debtors were punished through this practice of 'pittura infamante' (defamatory paintings), which was considered a significant form of civic art and a practice of punishment.[21] In a period in which the holders of power actually needed the consent of public opinion, the ubication of these paintings was relevant and institutional buildings located in strategic areas of the city were favored. Thus, it is not surprising that in Florence these kinds of decoration were executed on the external walls of the Bargello, to reinforce the civic purpose of the palace as well as to reflect the function of the communal building as a site of justice (fig. 2).[22]

The Bargello remained the headquarters of the Florentine police until 1859 and in 1865, the year in which Florence became the capital of Italy for six years, the Bargello became a national museum and was freed from its violent past.[23] In 1841, moreover, the discovery of a Giottesque fresco showing Dante in the Cappella della Maddalena was used to elevate the building as historical monument and to transform it from an infamous place with difficult heritage into a high-valued monument of the future capital.[24] The prisoners were transferred from the Bargello to Le Murate, one of the main women's enclosed convents in Florence, which had already been used as a men's prison since 1832, following the closure of the Stinche.[25] It is relevant to point out that still now Le Murate is considered the historical Florentine prison *par excellence*, probably because significant architectural elements of its past as a place of imprisonment have been preserved.[26]

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[20] See PAOLOZZI STROZZI 2014, p. 6; TERRY 2010, pp.841–842.
[21] On the topic see ORTALLI 2015.
[22] On defamatory paintings in Florence, see EDGERTON 1985; the main examples of 'pittura infamante' at the Bargello are recorded in YUNN 2015, pp. 183–184.
[23] Dante was ironically sentenced to death in the Bargello in 1302. Thus, by celebrating a national icon like Dante with an exhibition on him and the medieval arts in the Bargello in 1865 the building's rather dark history of 600 years of penitential use was 'whitewashed' in an instant. See CISERI 2021; PAOLOZZI STROZZI 2014; pp. 4–9; TERRY 2010, pp. 843, 846; BAROCCHI, GAETA BERTELÀ 1985.
[24] The fresco is dated c. 1337.
[25] TROTTA 1999, p. 16, 52 (doc. 88).
[26] The requalification project of Le Murate maintained as important historical documents the section of hard prison and the panopticon, see GENSINI 2018.

Santissima Annunziata delle Murate (commonly referred to as Le Murate) is probably one of the best-known convents of the Florentine Renaissance. Its establishment began in 1390 with a small community of devoted women living together in a house situated on the Rubaconte bridge, today known as Ponte delle Grazie (fig. 3). Within a few years, this site developed into the city's largest female religious institution, occupying a vast site on via Ghibellina in 1424. During the following centuries, the convent became an important cultural crossroad.[27] The rules of enclosure played an important role in Le Murate's history and in its architectural structure. Despite numerous renovations during the 17th and 18th centuries, many functional elements were developed for the maintenance of the convent enclosure. The convent itself was suppressed in 1808 by the French Government and the building remained without any official designation until 1832 when it was used as the 'Casa di Correzione per maschi' (Correctional House for males). In 1848, it was officially declared city prison.[28] During World War II, the Murate Prison was notorious for being the detention center for numerous political dissidents of the fascist regime including intellectuals and prominent figures in the cultural world such as Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, Carlo Levi, Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli and that 'uncomfortable' presence is still visible in the musealized part of the complex.[29]

Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, following the Council of Trent (1545–1563), the number of enclosed convents increased in all Italian cities. Tridentine instructions defined new rules and the female communities became islands within Italian urban topographies.[30] The locations of the nuns reflected specific logics of settlement and women's monasteries were placed close to city walls. In this way the nuns could experience isolation, avoiding the dangers of both the countryside and the chaotic city centers.[31] The pursuit of isolation, while still remaining within the walls, was based on a strict distancing from male religious communities, secular institutions, and overcrowded squares. The female monasteries were also located along main axes and

[27] For historical details on the foundation of the convent see TROTTA 1999, pp. 1–6; WEDDLE 2003, pp. 106–123.
[28] FANTOZZI MICALI, ROSELLI 1980, pp. 78–79. During the 19th century numerous interventions were made to render the former convent an even more inaccessible fortress, see TROTTA 1999, pp. 18–26.
[29] For a complete list of the intellectuals detained at Le Murate, see MICHELOTTI 2013, pp. 83–161.
[30] On the reorganization of feminine convents after the Council of Trent see PASCHINI 1960; ZARRI 1986, pp. 411–429; STROCCHIA 2009, pp. 152–190.
[31] On the topic see WEDDLE 2006; BEVILACQUA 2014.

arteries, constituting proper religious itineraries.[32] In Florence, this area corresponded to the eastern part of the city that had seen the presence of the Murate and Santa Verdiana convents since the late Middle Age, and it was further expanded and completed with the nuns of Santa Teresa in 1628. They were all located along the Via Ghibellina, a road that connects the Bargello in a direct line to the margins of the medieval city.

The monastery of Santa Verdiana was founded in the late Gothic period and reached its maximum expansion between the 16th and the 17th century, when the adaptation to Tridentine standards was an opportunity to restore the entire complex.[33] Between 1767 and 1782 there was a considerable reduction in the number of convents in Florence because of the Leopoldine suppressions.[34] Although included in the list of religious institutions to be converted into schools or transformed for community use, Santa Verdiana managed to survive up to the Napoleonic period in 1808. Thus, the convent began a process of secularization that would culminate in 1865 with its conversion into a women's prison. This not only involved functional changes in the existing buildings, like closing the arches of the cloister, but also required the construction of entirely new sections for more cells and isolation spaces.[35] During the 20th century, women in Santa Verdiana were mostly imprisoned for political reasons, correlating with what was happening in the same decades at Le Murate.

The convent of Santa Teresa was founded in the first half of the 17th century and it was located within the 13th century city walls, in an area of expansion for the city.[36] As happened with Santa Verdiana, the suppression of this convent was ordered by the French government in 1808.[37] In 1866 a Royal Decree authorized the occupation of the convent to use it as a prison and in 1871 there were reports of the hiring and transfer of guards to the prison of Santa Teresa. In order to adapt the space for the new purpose, profound changes affected the former convent complex: the cloister and the church

[32] BEVILACQUA 2014, p. 970.

[33] On the history of the convent see OREFICE 1996; FARNETI, VAN RIEL 2017, pp. 19–44.

[34] On the suppression of women's convents in Florence by Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo (*Motuproprio* 21 March 1785), see FANTOZZI MICALI, ROSELLI 1980.

[35] FARNETI, VAN RIEL 2017, pp. 49–65.

[36] For more details on the foundation of the convent and its early history see RICHA, 1755 (1972), vol. 1, pp. 333–355.

[37] In these years the gran ducal architect Giuseppe Del Rosso was commissioned to draw up a complete plan of the Santa Teresa complex, which is considered the first document that fully analyzes the building's fabrication. The plan is reproduced in GIANNONI 2016, p. 110.

remained quite the same while the rest of the original building became almost unrecognizable. Santa Verdiana and Santa Teresa were both turned into prisons in the same years that Florence became the capital of Italy. With the emerging need to find the structures required to accommodate the new state functions, the former convents, with summary adjustments, were quickly adapted to new uses.[38] The occupation of convents was also implemented by a law of the newly created Regno d'Italia, which allowed the occupation of buildings of religious corporations for reasons of public service.[39] From the origins of prison construction, convents were thus converted into spaces that could be used as prisons, also a result of the integration, from the Middle Ages, of the Catholic Church with the political-administrative establishments of the state. The concept of solitary confinement found its most suitable form in the distribution of cells along a corridor, the internal cloister provided a closure to the outside, and the peripheral location of the convents ensured the marginalization of the detainees.[40] Prison architecture has been subject to numerous developments over the centuries, but, despite various possible declinations, a courtyard typology isolated from society has almost always remained a constant feature of their design.

Contemporary prison architecture in Italy is marked by a tendency towards progressive segregation and the estrangement of places of detention from urban environments.[41] This can be traced in the Florentine context through the life-long fight of the architect Giovanni Michelucci (1891–1990) against the marginalization of prisons and in support of their abolition.[42] Michelucci dreamt of an 'ideal' town (and society) where prisons were no longer needed because more effective solutions had been found.[43] In the 1970s, the Florentine administration decided to abandon the former prison spaces in the city center in favor of a modern and ambitious prison project in the periphery of Florence – Sollicciano prison, planned as a utopic 'prison city' in the modified form of a telegraph

[38] GIANNONI 2016, p. 115.
[39] Law 384 (22 December 1861), 'Che accorda al Governo la facoltà di occupare per ragioni di pubblico servizio le Case delle Corporazioni religiose'.
[40] PENNISI 2021, pp. 24–25.
[41] On this topic see PAONE 2002; GIOFRÈ 2018.
[42] This is collected in MICHELUCCI 1993.
[43] Michelucci's groundbreaking ideas clashed with a harsh reality, since the post-war period was the era of terrorism in Italy with organizations such as Prima Linea, many of whose members were incarcerated in the prisons of Le Murate and Santa Verdiana.

pole jail.[44] He openly criticized the project and emphasized the danger of marginalization of prison spaces:

> The city's tendency to remove from itself the places of punishment does not represent a positive evolution of its ability to live with deviance so much as an attempt to remove from its own body all the problems it considers disfiguring to its conventional image.[45]

Nevertheless, Michelucci was initiator (and mediator) of the 'Giardino degli Incontri' (Meeting Garden), a visit center inside Sollicciano prison that he designed in close collaboration with the inmates: an airy, roofed, and light-flooded cement forest surrounded by a large green area with an artificial river and an open-air theater (fig. 4). This last project by the Florentine architect reflects his way of dealing with the uncomfortable prison surroundings, the realization of one of his most utopic ideas.[46]

In 1983, the new prison at Sollicciano was opened and all the prisoners from Le Murate, Santa Verdiana, and Santa Teresa were transferred there. Those places remained abandoned for few years, but already at the end of the 1980s the municipality decided on their reuse. Santa Verdiana and Santa Teresa were assigned to the Faculty of Architecture and they were both involved in relevant adjustment works.[47] The fate of the Murate was less linear: after several competitions and design proposals, the former cloistered convent was transformed into a multifunctional complex that includes social housing and, among other things, the center of contemporary art MAD – Murate Art District.[48]

All historic Florentine prisons have become 'central' spaces of culture, fully embedded in the city's social fabric despite their 'peripheral' and isolated past. Somehow, they confirmed Michelucci's vision that 'the no-man's land that the city imposes between itself and the prison will have to become the space of a new creativity'.[49]

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[44] GIOFRÈ 2018, p. 109.

[45] Translated by the authors from MICHELUCCI 1993, p. 65. The architect also proposed various projects of reuse for the abandoned buildings of Le Murate (MICHELUCCI 1993, pp. 57–60). The Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci preserves many drawings regarding his idea of requalification.

[46] The project was begun in 1985 and completed only in 2004, 14 years after the comparison of Michelucci. See GIOFRÈ 2018, p. 119.

[47] FARNETI, VAN RIEL 2017, pp. 69–86, 89–101; BRESCHI 2016.

[48] *Un'idea per le Murate* 1988; GENSINI 2018, pp. 171–185.

[49] MICHELUCCI 1993, p. 66.

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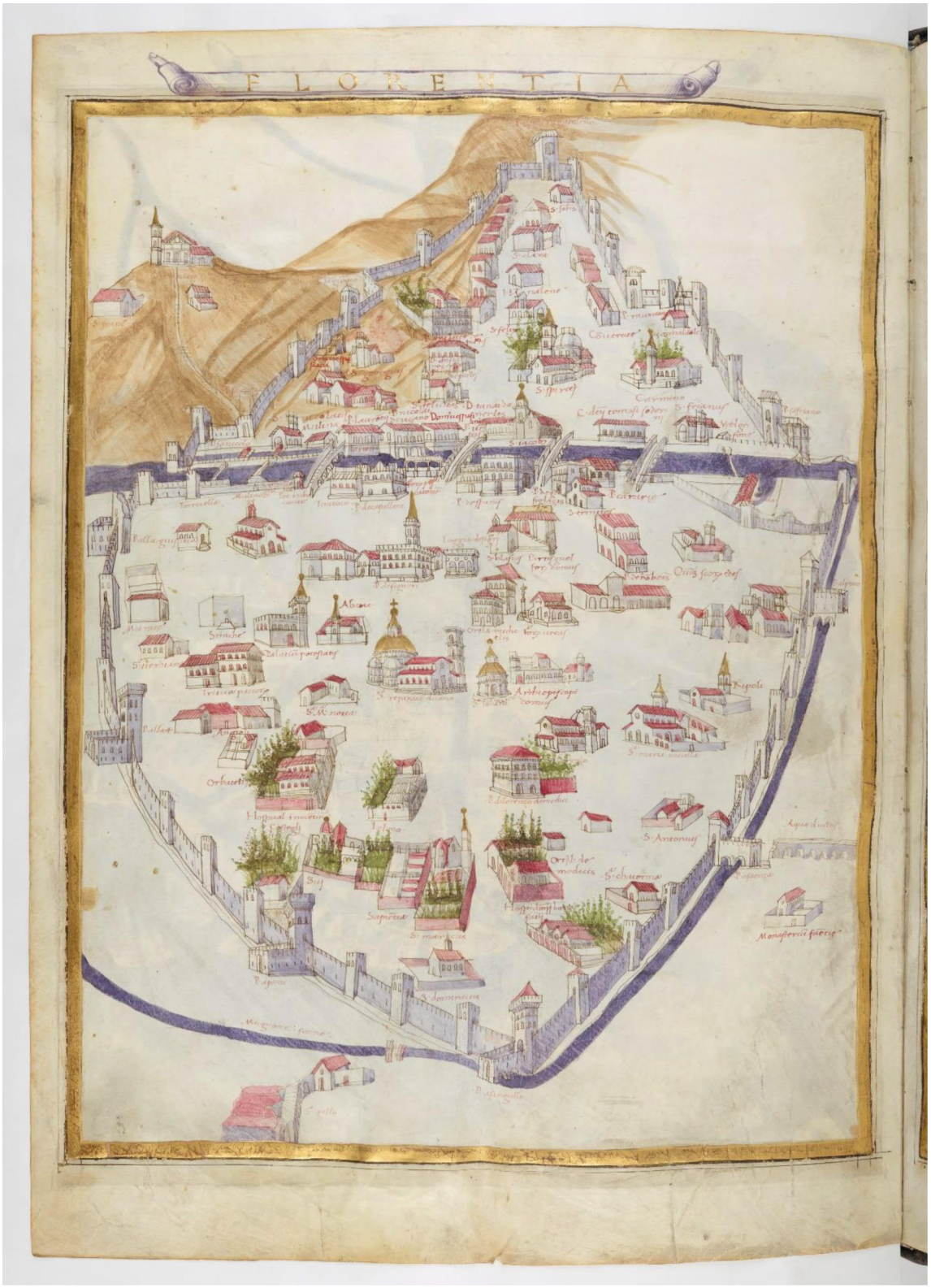

Fig. 1 Claudius Ptolomaeus, *Cosmographia* (transl. by Jacobus Angelus), manuscript, second half of the 15th century, fol. 132v. Paris, BnF, Département des manuscrits, Latin 4802

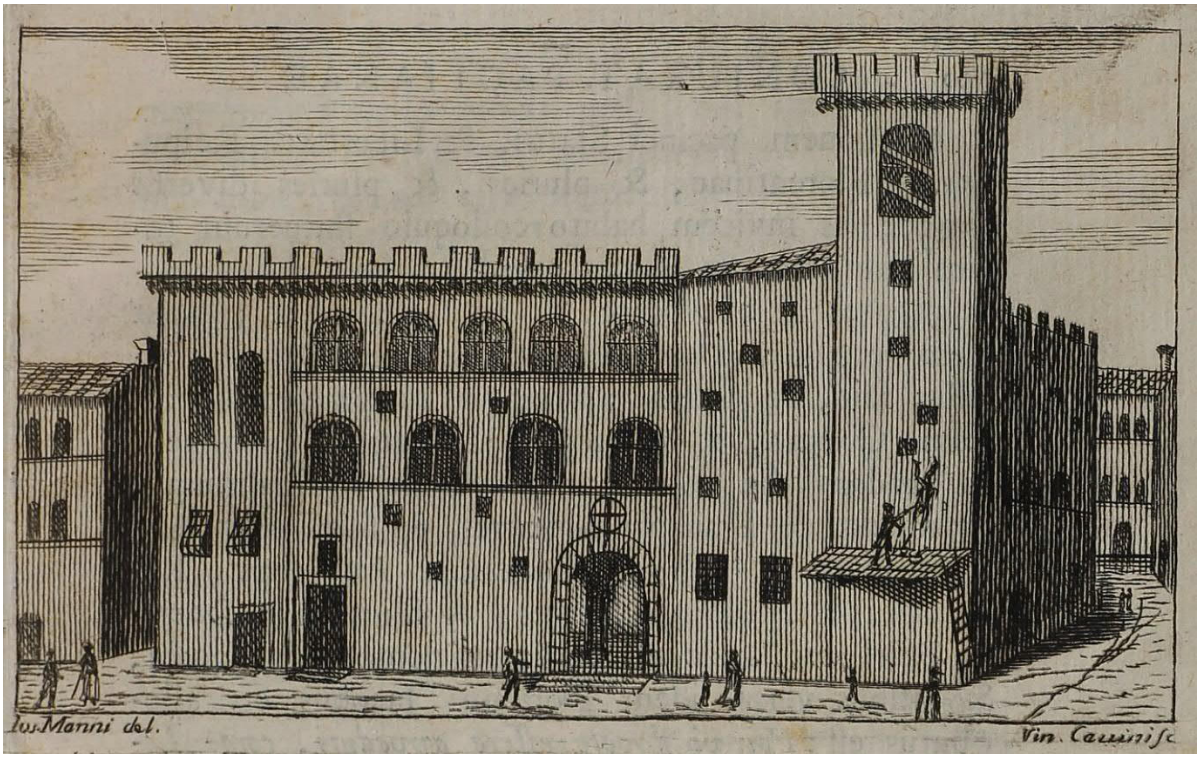

Fig. 2 Representation of the Palazzo del Podestà in Florence with a defamatory painting in progress, in ALTOMARE Giovanni d', *Angeli Politiani Conjurationis Pactianae anni MCCCCLXXVIII commentarium. Documentis, figuris, notis, nunc primum inlustratum*, Naples 1769, p. 139. Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut

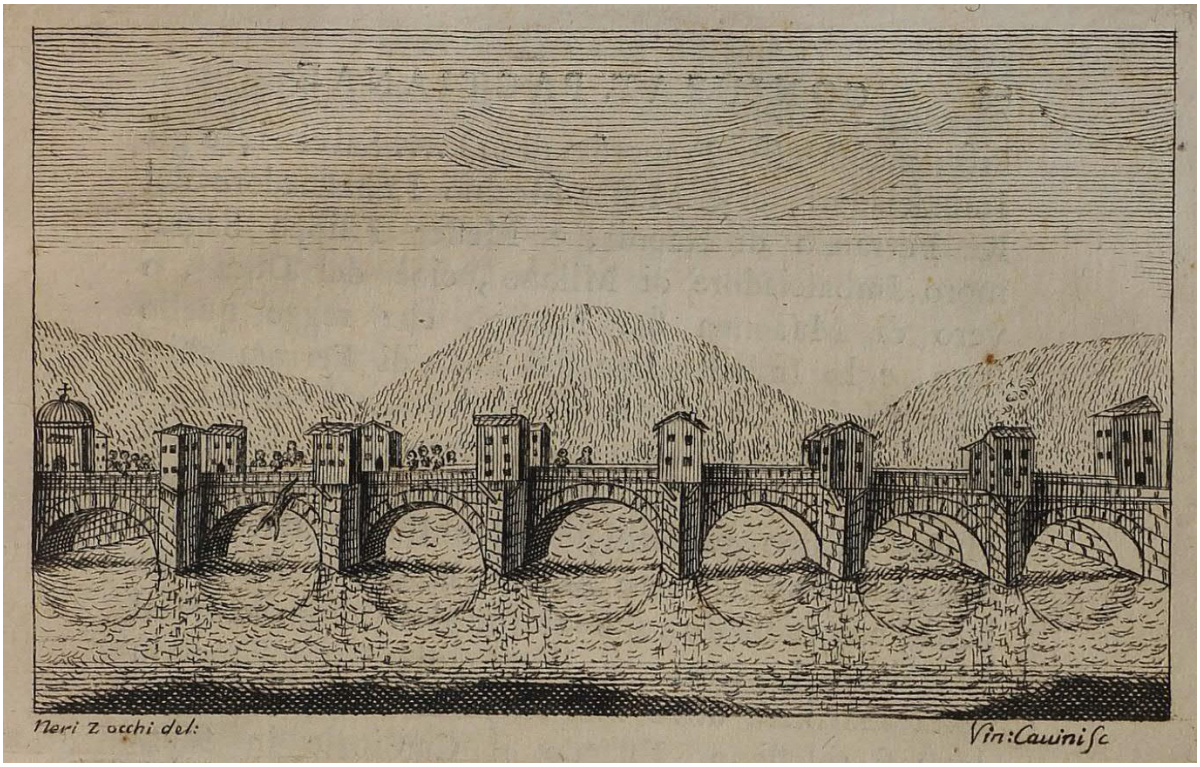

Fig. 3 Representation of the Ponte delle Grazie in Florence, in ALTOMARE Giovanni d', *Angeli Politiani Conjurationis Pactianae anni MCCCCLXXVIII commentarium. Documentis, figuris, notis, nunc primum inlustratum*, Naples 1769, p. 77. Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut

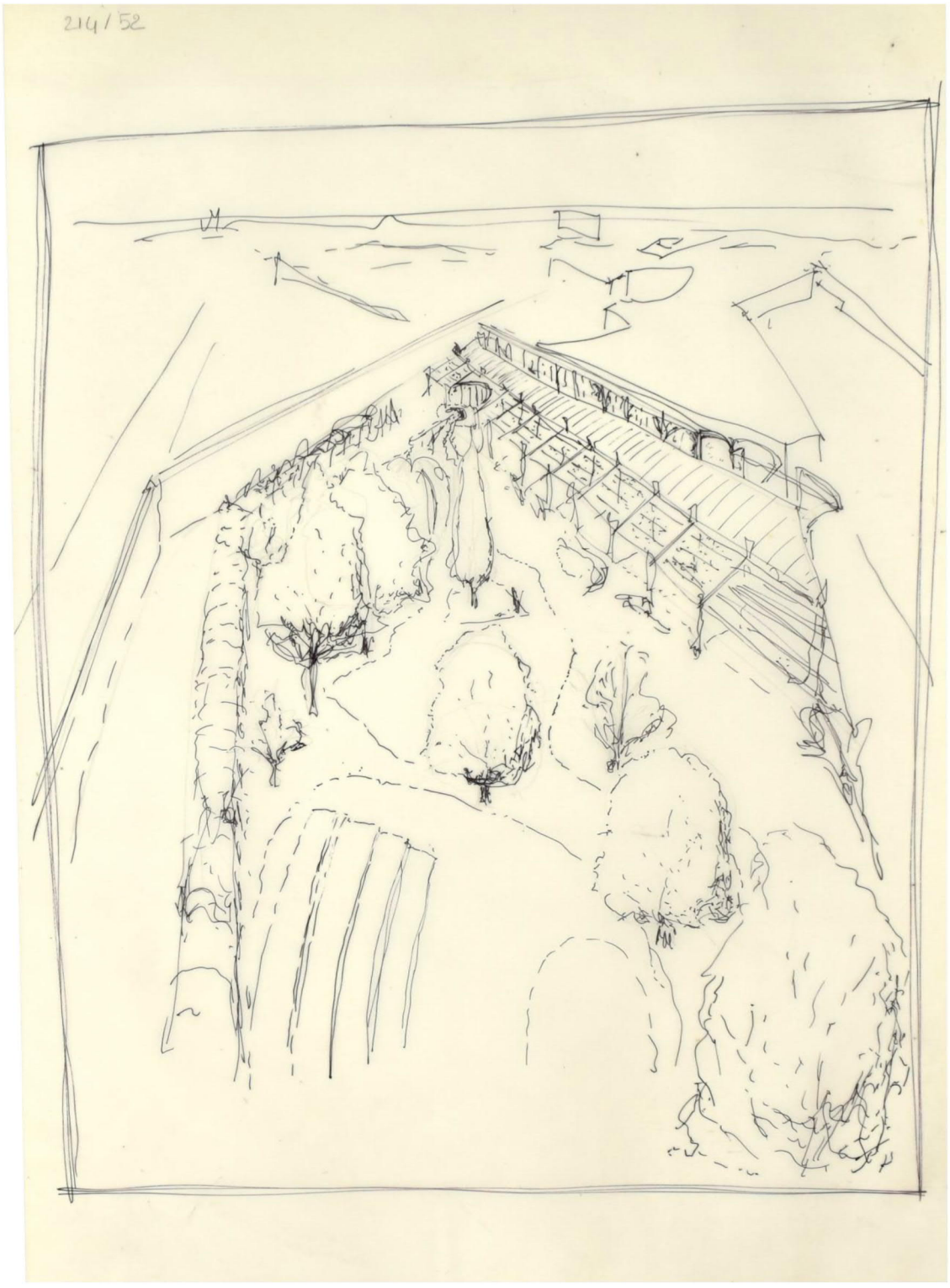

Fig. 4 Giovanni Michelucci, Study Drawing of the Giardino degli Incontri in Sollicciano prison (Florence) 1986–2005; Inv. AP214052. Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci, Fiesole (FI)

The Staircase that Never Was: A Sketch by Carlo Scarpa for Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri

Flavia Crisciotti

In the archive of the Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo (MAXXI) in Rome is a longitudinal section through Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri by the architect Carlo Scarpa (1906–1978).[1] Executed around 1973, soon after Scarpa's engagement as consultant in the remodeling of the Palazzo,[2] this drawing shows a prominent staircase that rises from the Sala Terrana and continues up to the Aula Magna of the first floor (fig. 1). These stairs may be regarded as Scarpa's response to the presence on site[3] of graffiti linked to its former use as prison and not really considered today, although they attracted more audience attention at the time.[4] Ever conscious of the need to establish a dialogue between his designs and the existing environment, Scarpa considered introducing a staircase which first led the visitor to the graffiti at the mezzanine level, and then drew the gaze upwards towards the highly decorated wooden ceiling of the Aula Magna. While the idea represented on this sheet was not executed, it reveals that Scarpa's primary aim was to include these graffiti in the museographic programme of the Palazzo. The drawing has been mentioned and reproduced by Antonietta Iolanda Lima in *Lo Steri di Palermo nel secondo Novecento*,[5] as well as in a monograph on Scarpa's projects in Sicily by Matteo Iannello. [6] Both scholars reconstruct the context for this work but without giving any interpretation for the relationship between the design and the graffiti. Furthermore, since the overall project seems largely to have escaped the wealth of recent literature on Carlo Scarpa, this short article aims to analyze the drawing more in

[1] Archivio Museo Nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (hereafter MAXXI Archive), Cat. 51834. Drawing on tracing paper, in pencil with some applied colour (yellow and red), measuring 32,6 x 53 cm. This sheet is placed on top of the longitudinal section E-F in scale 1:50, measuring 61,8 x 115 cm. Together, the two attached pieces represent the unbuilt proposal for the main building of Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri.

[2] It was Roberto Calandra who appointed in 1972 Carlo Scarpa as a consultant architect for designing the interior of Palazzo Chiaramonte Steri, in LIMA 2006, p. 62.

[3] Antonietta Iolanda Lima has first advanced this hypothesis in LIMA 2006, p. 160.

[4] A comprehensive study of these graffiti is a major scholarly desideratum, as they have been just briefly mentioned in SCIASCIA 1977.

[5] LIMA 2006, p. 177.

[6] IANNELLO 2018, p. 138.

depth.[7] The obsessive concern among scholars to focus on Scarpa's individual work may partially explain this neglect.[8] The interior of Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri is in fact the result of the collaborative planning among Scarpa and three members of the University of Palermo: Roberto Calandra (architect, 1915–2015), Camillo Filangeri (architectural historian, 1932–2013) and Nino Vicari (engineer, 1925).[9] Calandra and Vicari were responsible of the execution of the work and, after Scarpa's death, their approach followed the initial ideas while simultaneously facing new budgetary and bureaucratic restrictions.

The Palazzo's history of restoration is not without relevance to the reconstruction of the drawing's genesis. Through a series of selective interventions during the 1930s, the palace was stripped of its seventeenth-century architectural details in an attempt to reclaim its medieval character.[10] Between 1970 and 1972, the matter of whether the prison cells, with the inmates' pictorial and textual graffiti, ought or ought not to be demolished became something of a *cause celebre* according to the accounts of Roberto Calandra and Nino Vicari.[11] A partial removal of the walls delimiting the cells had the effect of revealing a suggestive triple arcade in the Sala Terrana, which can be seen in Scarpa's drawing.

We know that a leading figure in conservation practices, Cesare Brandi (1906–1988),[12] paid attention to this specific stage in the restoration of the Steri. Impressed with the form of arches uncovered beneath the walls of the cells, he was eager to liberate them from anything that obstructed their outlook. The writer Leonardo Sciascia passionately argued against the intervention in favour of a less invasive approach, where the prison cells were saved in order to display publicly evidence of the Holy Inquisition period.[13] At this point, the physical aspect of the drawing is easier to discuss. It is a freehand, rapid sketch based on the survey of 1972. Nowhere in the drawing are graffiti specifically indicated but, building upon coeval descriptions and photographs,[14] it may be inferred that the circulation route was developed to encounter them. Because of the applied colour, the staircase is evidenced as the main object in the drawing. This element looks similar to the staircase Scarpa designed for Castelvecchio

[7] Few materials have appeared on the 1972–1998 arrangement of Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri. The project was not featured in influential monographs on Scarpa, including DAL CO, MAZZARIOL 1985 or in *Carlo Scarpa* 2000.
[8] LIMA 2006, p. 75.
[9] IANNELLO 2018, p. 137.
[10] VICARI 2019, pp. 33–35. For a detailed account of the 1930s interventions, see LIMA 2006, pp. 33–53.
[11] CALANDRA 1991, p. 32; VICARI 2019, p. 71. Also mentioned in IANNELLO 2018, p. 138; LIMA 2006, pp. 140.
[12] At the time, Brandi was also member of the government's commission on Arabic-Norman monuments.
[13] Iannello reported how both Brandi and Sciascia exposed their opinion on national newspapers, in IANNELLO 2018, p. 160, note 18.
[14] Photographs by Bruno Adamo published in VICARI 2019, p. 71.

Museum where it was built to give dignity to the otherwise barely visible fragments of Trecento frescoes.[15] The staircase in Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri similarly played a vital role for appreciating the ornamental programme of the building. It sat comfortably in scale with the triple arcade, and in tune with the atmosphere of the museum. Scarpa considered the walls as storehouses of information resources that could be reworked along with the building itself. In Palazzo Abatellis, for instance, he displayed three detached frescoes in special niches that were cut out in the portico, close to the staircase. In this way, there was no interruption of the museum visit, even when ascending the steps.[16] On the left side of the drawing is a small study of the arrangement of the Aula Magna, with the U-shaped seating plan reminiscent of the House of Commons chamber. This means that Scarpa was developing the design of the staircase, while organizing the path in terms of a visual sequence. The circulation route followed the position of graffiti and the decoration of the wooden ceiling, so that the story of the Palazzo unfolded before the visitor. There are other studies for this staircase in the MAXXI archive, which testify to the importance of the element in the whole process. Scarpa would have later expressed his opinion on the staircase that was rejected by the Soprintendenza in an interview:

> To the question whether a building like this can be brought back to life, I will answer: absolutely! It is a building that must be brought back to life, because it is possible to do so! And with bolder forms than the Superintendents or the defenders of the building would like to do: it is the Superior Council of Fine Arts that prevents us from making, inside a hall, a staircase that could be a minor masterpiece![17]

The government's commission on Arabic-Norman monuments approved eventually the restoration of the arcade to its original form and the removal of the cells. The commission ordered nevertheless to leave the traces of walls and ceilings on the walls, which are still today visible.[18] As was fashionable at the time, in 1973 the graffiti were detached just before the ultimate demolition, and preserved in the storages of the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia. The graffiti had not been systematically recorded during the intervention and the missing context made their identification difficult. It was not until 1996 that the artefacts were relocated in the Sala Terrana according to Calandra's installation design.[19] Scarpa's drawing eventually

[15] MURPHY 2004, pp. 393–400.
[16] For a comment on this display method see VIGNI 1956, p. 209.
[17] Translated by the author from PIRRONE 1986, p. 90. Carlo Scarpa was interviewed by Gianni Pirrone on December 1975, but a fragment of the text was published only in 1986.
[18] For the document stating the reasons behind the final decision see VICARI 2019, p. 69.
[19] Two drawings by Calandra are published in VICARI 2019, p. 72.

offers much more than evidence of the author's draughtmanship, serving to expand on the discussion about site-specificity of graffiti.[20]

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[20] 'The sited-ness of these graffiti is a major draw for visitors, since the prison and its pedagogy are perceived as authentic', in BASILICÒ 2023, p. 46. I thank the author for having shared her research with me.

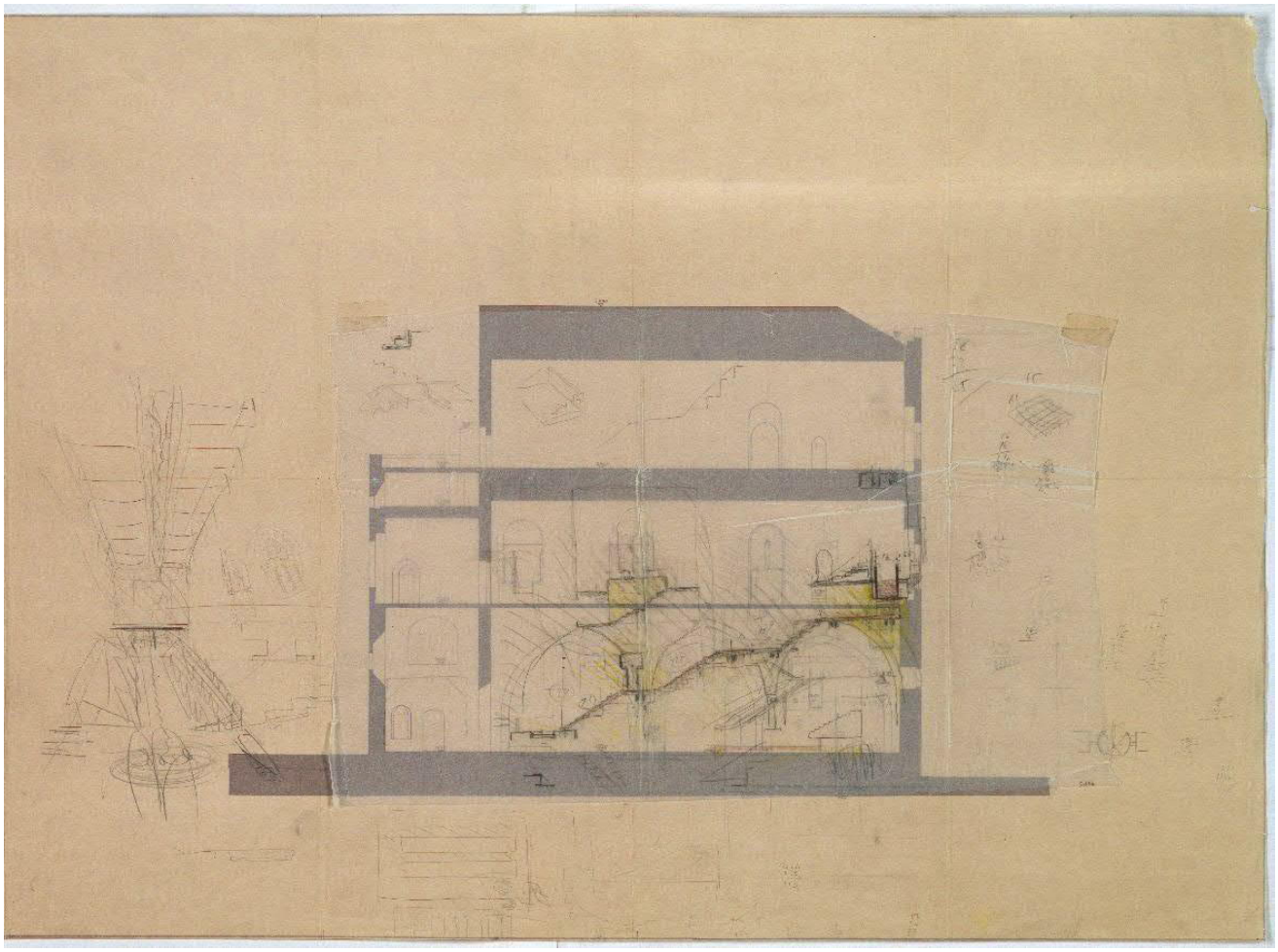

Fig. 1 Carlo Scarpa, Palazzo Chiaramonte (Steri), Palermo, Study for the connection between the Sala Terrana and the Aula Magna (Carlo Scarpa Archives, Cat. 51834, MAXXI, Rome). Courtesy of MAXXI Rome

An Autopsy[1] of Plain Lines: Examples from the Former Stasi Prison, Berlin-Hohenschönhausen

Elizabeth Hoak-Doering

This essay introduces a method for analysing nonsymbolic graffiti markings: scratched lines that are neither images nor text, found in many places and time periods. The method is specific to hand made lines, which I call 'plain lines', and which are often seen in the context of symbolic graffiti. Analyzing plain lines does not lead to symbolic meaning (they do not 'mean' anything) but I will demonstrate that it leads to meaning in a kinetic sense (plain lines demonstrate activity). Plain lines are not deliberate acts of communication, instead, they are the nonverbal, gestural side of graffiti discourse.[2] Here I present an argument for plain lines being a distinct category of graffiti marking, with clear attributes, and I have a method for distinguishing and analysing them. It is summarized here, along with a few challenges this entails. Finally, two examples of plain lines from a modern prison demonstrate the potential for, and relevance of looking at plain lines in the exploration of marked environments. The idea to analyze nonsymbolic markings arose during my research in 2017–2022 when I recorded inscriptions in prison cells of the former Stasi remand prison Berlin Hohenschönhausen – known for constant surveillance, regular psychological torture and other repressive measures.[3] The inscriptions were made between

[1] In epigraphy an 'autopsy' is methodical observation and recording of an inscription in its original location, resulting in a definitive record for future scholarly reference. Autopsy must be done on site, in person. It includes location, size, surface, condition, method and position of production, supplemented by illustration and photography. Epigraphers exclude markings that complicate a graffito's meaning, i.e., plain lines. Thus, the autopsy of plain lines uses the same epigraphic methods to different ends: it seeks movement and body positioning, not symbolic meaning. See VARONE 2008, p. 125 for a contemporary summary of epigraphic autopsy, see BRUUN, EDMONDSON 2014, pp. 5–6 for the traditional epigraphic autopsy.

[2] By discourse, I include palimpsests made over time by one or more people along with the solipsistic activity of marking and seeing.

[3] The Stasi prison Berlin-Hohenschönhausen was not stormed like other government buildings in November of 1989, possibly because it was in a blank area of the Berlin city map. It continued to be guarded and by mid-January 1990 it fell into temporary disuse. The Stasi had ample time, therefore, to destroy evidence of their cruelty and the effects of their tactics (see RUDNICK 2014, p. 230). For legal and socio-political history of the Stasi regime relating to this, and other remand prisons of the GDR see GIESEKE, BURNETT 2014. For inmate conditions at Berlin-Hohenschönhausen and testimony see SPOHR 2015.

the last whitewashing and the prison's abandonment, ca. 1987–1990. In these extreme conditions even the simplest lines seemed to be important, and their abundance suggested that they could be meaningful; the problem was how to analyse them. This type of evidence is usually managed quantitatively, through mapping and spatial analysis. I have also developed a qualitative approach that I summarize here.

What are plain lines? In graffiti studies there are two symbolic diagnostic poles, image and text and the literature generally relies on this difference for reference, cataloguing and analysis.[4] While made in the same media and often found side-by-side, plain lines are neither text nor image. Instead, they are the 'noise' that seems to get in the way of symbolic graffiti; the markings that are usually explicitly not of interest.[5] They may be called accidental, or abstract, they have no content (a word, a name, a picture) and for these reasons they are typically excluded from data.[6] Not all 'noise' can be called plain lines, however. Plain lines are only associated with bodily gestures and the method I use helps separate out other nonsymbolic lines that are mechanically or naturally formed. One challenge is that, without symbolic content, plain lines need to be categorized and discussed in terms of their material and visual qualities, e.g. shape, line morphology, relative location and probable mode of production.

To discern and analyze plain lines I use a method I call 'shadowing,' or simulating the making of a particular line or set of lines. Much like in the first steps of epigraphic autopsy, shadowing entails standing by markings and tracing the lines in air – finding out how a body could have moved in such a place to produce certain kinds and qualities of line. In doing so, the researcher reenacts an activity made in the past, learns what it was, and notes data that can be contextualized in interdisciplinary ways: information about movement and interactions with architecture. Shadowing also has a precedent in archaeological replication experiments, common since the mid-twentieth century for understanding

[4] Among many who point out this epistemological problem, see BAIRD 2011, p. 6 and FLEMING 2020, pp. 31–32.
[5] VARONE 2008, p. 125; CONKEY 1982, p. 121.
[6] By contrast, in an art-historical framework, these 'abstract' lines could be interpreted psychologically, as visceral expressions of emotion. WORRINGER 1997 (1908), pp. 3–25.

processes of production.[7] The difference is that no material replica is produced; instead, the researcher's body becomes a source of data about physical activity. Shadowing can provide information about body position, duration, force – even suggest kinaesthetic experience or sounds derived from manufacture. The reason why contemporary researchers can embody gestures from the past is because of a very general, timeless understanding of patterns that the human form typically makes.[8] Human bodies are sources of diverse yet characteristic linear markings, particularly curves. If 'drawing a straight line' is the measure of someone being skilled at visual art, it is because the body's physiological tendency to make curves must be overcome by will or by training.[9] Without spatial constraints the natural range of motion in the human body is enormous.[10] When movements intersect with a surface the result is a curved line, like the arc that the hand travels when the arm swings back and forth, or the smaller one that the hand produces from the wrist.[11] These are all plain lines because they are dynamic evidence of a body in motion. The autopsy of plain lines consists of shadowing, combined with qualitative observation. It results in an embodied understanding of physical activity that can be analysed and applied to other contexts, e.g. history, architecture, archaeology.

At this point it would be reasonable to ask, why do this? If archaeological or historical data exist, why pay attention to nonsymbolic markings? First, a category of movement that goes alongside the usual text and image categories can alleviate a tendency to contrive symbolic meanings from lines that actually relate to activity. Second, not all communication is symbolic. Movement, kinesthetic experience and body positioning are meaningful when

[7] Among many replication experiments of mark making see: in prehistoric archaeology, RODRIGUEZ-VIDAL 2014, and in classical archaeology, LOHMANN 2017, pp. 247–253.

[8] See BINFORD 1983, pp. 144–152.

[9] Tim Ingold explains the difference between making a plain line and a straight line: 'Surely every trace left by a dextrous movement of the hand is itself a line… Fully linearized, the line is no longer the trace of a gesture but a chain of point-to-point connections. In these connections there is neither life nor movement', see INGOLD 2007, p. 84.

[10] The 'kinesphere' in choreography, See LABAN 2011, p. 10.

[11] Alexander Perrig finds this physiological correlation in the context of identifying copies of masterworks. The draughtsman's hand naturally produces 'flat sections of circles' from the wrist, while straight lines are a 'deviation from the norm… additional control energies are required', in PERRIG 1991, p. 16.

put into context and his strongly suggests that activity and gesture need to be part of the way we understand graffiti, in general.

Analyzing plain lines in the Stasi prison revealed activities that might be atypical of prisoners under surveillance, especially since damaging walls was a punishable offence. Plain lines shed light on risks, autonomy and self-determination. In the space left here, I will present just two examples of plain lines indicative of deliberation, sensory experiences and body positioning relative to the warden's gaze and I will argue that these lines are a kind of micro-resistance. A note on the accompanying images: plain lines are finely inscribed into whitewash and difficult to photograph. Elsewhere I use explanatory diagrams.

Found at opposite ends of the same cell, examples A and B (figs. 1–2) represent instances of sensory markings, where the inmate deliberately interacted with the architecture. Each is a very fine solo stroke, beginning above eye-level and swinging or following gravity down to the end of the whitewash at chest height. In two different ways, the corners in the walls act as guides to produce straight lines. In A, the inmate follows an inside corner with one gesture from top down. In B, the inmate follows the left outside corner of the window jamb, using the corner to guide a right-handed stroke, either with a tool or fingernail. B is in full view of the warden's spy hole, thus riskier than A. Both A and B are similar in length and line morphology: neither is tapered, both are indented at terminal points indicated by the yellow arrows in the images. Without declaring dissent in symbolic terms, two practically invisible vertical strokes tell us something about an inmate's mindset and connect to decisions made at a precise moment in time.[12] They show someone exploring the cell and contemplating its surfaces: subjectively, creatively and with some risk. They represent seconds of idiosyncratic thinking, which was a kind of resistance inside the mechanism of a system designed to produce uniformity and compliance. These are just two examples of plain lines: tactile, gestural interactions with walls, evidence of a body in motion both on,

[12] Prosopography is difficult in this prison. Out of nearly 350 markings in twenty-two cells, twenty-two first names appear. Four more are full names, two of which were probably written on a visit after the prison closed. Two more may be pop-stars. Not all names match prison records. Writing on the wall carried the risk of additional punishment, and names may appear for many reasons e.g. friendship, desire, debts.

and shaped by architecture. Because these lines are kinetically legible, they shed light on subjective realms of experience that are not as salient in symbolic graffiti. Universally applied, this approach can give value to a multitude of plain lines that are dismissed from data because until now there has been no methodical way to discuss them.

* Selected from 'Intentions Through Hands and Time: A framework for analysing informal inscriptions on objects and surfaces,' the author's doctoral thesis at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Department of Classical Archaeology (forthcoming). The thesis is diachronic (I use this methodology also on sites in Pompeii) and this essay draws from the modern case study: original research and analysis of more than 300 inscriptions from the third floor of the former remand prison, now a memorial, museum and educational site, The Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.

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Fig. 1 Example A, Cell 327, Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.
Photo: Elizabeth Hoak-Doering

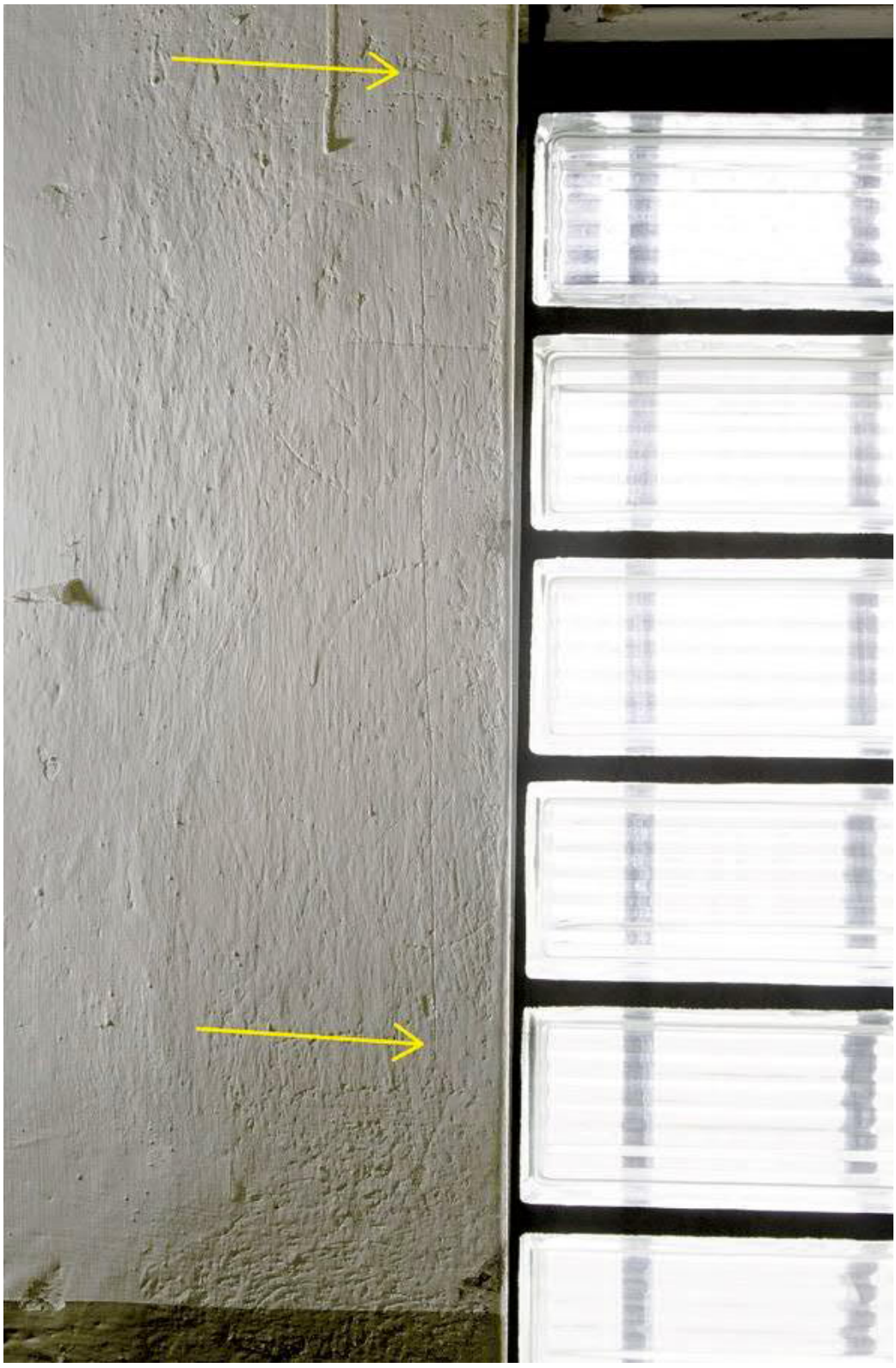

Fig. 2 Example B, Cell 327, Berlin- Hohenschönhausen.
Photo: Elizabeth Hoak-Doering

The Photographs of Segundo Escolar at Bermeo's Psychiatric Sanatorium[1]

Marcos Larraz Rincón

Between the end of spring and the beginning of summer 1975, the Spanish plastic artist Segundo Escolar Díez (1944)[2] made a photographic reportage at Bermeo's Psychiatric Sanatorium in Spain, documenting the life of its inmates. In 1998 he tried to publish these photographs as a book,[3] but due first to editing problems and then to censorship, its dissemination was interrupted. The book was denounced to the Basque Country Attorney Office, withdrawn, and its diffusion process paralyzed. It was not until 2019 —44 years after its realization— when his work was finally recovered and exhibited at the Contemporary Art Centre of Burgos.[4]

This paper aims to present a specific case within the general framework of the photographic representation of alienation. I will use an art-historical methodology in the line of visual culture studies to understand the images and their particular context in the history of Spanish photography and psychiatry. I will analyse therefore their subsequent process of diffusion and reception considering as main sources different research articles and media news, together with the original photographs, the censored book and an oral interview with the author himself.

Spanish Psychiatry in the 1970s

For centuries, Western societies rejected 'the insane', turned them into 'outsiders' and locked them away. As analyzed by Michel Foucault, the traditional discourses on madness responded to conservative, Christian and bourgeois moral values that legitimized the repressive practices used to deal with mental illness. Psychiatry, born in the 19th century, would inherit these discourses, hiding (not suppressing) them under the myths of scientific objectivity.[5]

[1] This research is part of my PhD thesis about "The photographic representation of alienation in Spanish mental institutions during the 19th and 20th centuries", developed at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zaragoza.
[2] For more information on his artistic career see <https://segundoescolar.wixsite.com/artes/resena-biografica>, accessed 16 March 2023.
[3] ESCOLAR 1998.
[4] The original photographs were compiled in the catalogue published by the Contemporary Art Centre of Burgos, on the occasion of the exhibition held at this institution in 2019/2020, in *Los diferentes* 2020.
[5] FOUCAULT 1967.

In the particular case of Spain, these same approaches were studied by the psychiatrist Enrique González Duro.[6] He observed how all these sociocultural factors, added to the lack of resources that the State had been dragging along for centuries, a legislation that promulgated this exclusion,[7] and different 'scientific' currents that pursued the genetic improvement of the Spanish people,[8] made the situation of the mentally ill certainly embarrassing in most of the institutions meant for their confinement.

Apart from occasional protests that achieved some minor reforms, it was not until the 1970s that real progress was made in the psychiatric field. At this time Spain was undergoing a complex process of profound change at all levels, and mental health was no exception, 'reaching public opinion as it had never done before'.[9] Press, and especially photography, which until the last third of the 20th century 'were only concerned with showing, if not the violent or threatening side of the disease, then the most clichéd and predictable',[10] would end up being decisive in this change. Progressively, different publications showed Spanish society the precarious reality of State psychiatric care, at the same time they disseminated the new currents of thought coming from abroad.[11] All this would succeed in raising awareness about 'the imperative need for reforms',[12] which would eventually take place in the following decades. These photographs, despite their importance, were not free of certain controversies. The main one was the choice of the most dramatic cases to cause the greatest possible impact on readers. Although they achieved their goals and enacted the desired reforms, at the same time they perpetuated many of the stigmas traditionally associated with mental illness, which generated —and continues to generate— an intense debate, studied by various authors.[13] In any case, there is no doubt about their historical and documentary value, turning them into 'representative pictures of the most dehumanized past in the asylums and its devastating effects on the individuals thus institutionalized'.[14]

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[6] GONZÁLEZ DURO 2021.
[7] CAMPOS 2016.
[8] CASANOVA 2020, p. 145.
[9] Translated by the author from HUERTAS 2017, p. 8.
[10] Translated by the author from MARTÍNEZ AZUMENDI 2017, p. 124.
[11] The most influential publications in this regard were the report written by journalist Guillermo Díaz-Plaja for the magazine *Triunfo* (DÍAZ-PLAJA, 1971); and the series of articles published by writer and also journalist Ángel María de Lera for the weekly health information journal *Tribuna Médica*, later compiled as a book under the title *La espiral de la mente* (*The mind spiral*) (DE LERA, 1972).
[12] Translated by the author from MARTÍNEZ AZUMENDI 2017, p. 125.
[13] PARDO 2019.
[14] Translated by the author from MARTÍNEZ AZUMENDI 2022, p. 170.

In this context, and as an example of the possibility of combining the documentary value, the denouncing factor, and the interest in their protagonists, approaching them from a human and respectful point of view, we must remark the photographs by Segundo Escolar at Bermeo's Psychiatric Sanatorium in 1975.

The Reportage at Bermeo's Psychiatric Sanatorium

In search of references for a graphic work on the singularity of unconventional people, a subject that had interested him since he was very young, Segundo Escolar lived for several weeks together with the patients of this institution, trying to gain their trust and becoming for them 'a tolerated and somewhat invisible presence'.[15] During that time, he captured 'unique moments of real people; of socially and morally excluded individuals, turned into anonymous subjects'.[16] Although the artist eventually abandoned his initial idea because of the impression the hospital environment had caused him, his photographs —which were supposed to be the basis of that work— show the approach to the subject that he wanted to take, completely opposed to the one taken by the media at that time (fig. 1). His images documented the life conditions of the inmates in the hospital, portraying them in different relaxed attitudes, engaged in their daily tasks and routines. The photographer always shows a totally human, decorous and respectful perspective, without focalizing on the aspects that could have been more sensationalist.

In addition to its documentary value, Escolar's reportage also has an undeniable technical and artistic value, thanks to his training and knowledge of the photographic medium. The use of light and shadows, the careful compositions, and his choice of black and white 'make us think, make us look for the color, the environment, the aura of these photos'.[17] But his most relevant contribution is the new point of view offered (figs. 2a–2b). The public was not familiar with this portrayal of mental illness, and it would remain in this way for a long time. Indeed, the interruption of the diffusion of Escolar's photographs and their concealment for more than four decades contributed to this situation, which also highlights furthermore the repression that both these subjects and their protagonists have suffered throughout history.

[15] Translated by the author from *Los diferentes* 2020, p. 7.
[16] Ibid.
[17] *Segundo Escolar en #CanalArte* [video], YouTube 'FundacionCajadeBurgos', 5 October 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGXlp4SqLPo>, accessed 24 February 2023.

Thus, given their historical and artistic value, Segundo Escolar's images constitute a documentary source of enormous interest, at a time of total social insensitivity towards these issues. His approach anticipates a representation of mental illness that would take several decades to be produced and recognized.

* This research is part of my PhD thesis about 'The photographic representation of alienation in Spanish mental institutions during the 19th and 20th centuries', developed at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zaragoza.

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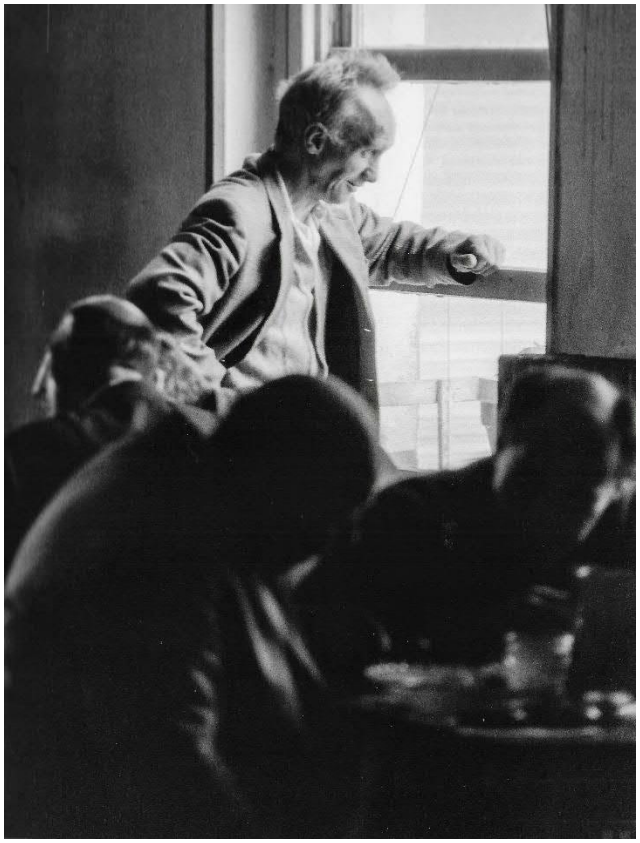
Fig. 1 Segundo Escolar Díez, Photograph taken at Bermeo's Psychiatric Sanatorium, 1975.
Courtesy of the S. Escolar Díez



Figs. 2a–2b Segundo Escolar Díez, Photographs taken at Bermeo's Psychiatric Sanatorium, 1975.
Courtesy of S. Escolar Díez

4 Contemporary Graffiti and Urban Life

Public Space and Urban Art in Spain. Walls in Conflict: The Feminist Movement as a Case Study

Pilar Biel Ibáñez

Introduction

Urban art is FASHIONABLE. Surf the web and you will find personal pages or blogs of graffiti artists and urban artists. Add to this the presence of news in the digital or printed press and the increasingly abundant academic bibliography on the different aspects of this artistic expression. For this reason, this text reflects on the current situation of urban art in Spain in the context of the global city. This artistic manifestation operates in the public space promoted by capitalist urbanism, which favours a paradox: on the one hand, urban art is criminalized and therefore repressed and punished; on the other hand, its presence promotes the regeneration of certain urban areas. Faced with this situation, a significant number of urban artists maintain their combative and denunciatory spirit, writing to make passers-by think or simply using the wall or any other urban support (benches, signs or other elements) to communicate with each other.

The main objective of this text is to look at some of the themes and techniques used by these Spanish artists to occupy public space, and to analyse the reactions of the people who encounter these spaces, which range from ignoring the message and/or entering into a dialogue with it, to those who cut short the act of communication by crossing over the graffiti or rubbing it out. In this way, walls in public space become involved in an act of communication that reflects the conflict in certain areas of society, as we will see later in our case study on feminism and its presence in public space.

The Political Dimension of Public Space

There is a lot of literature on the concept of the public space, which defines it from different perspectives, from the understanding of it as a legal object to a space for social gatherings that lies somewhere between the public and the private.[1] Public space is understood as social or collective space *par excellence*. It is a space that belongs to everyone and in which all actions

[1] MESA-PEDRAZA, DUQUE CALVACHE 2021; SENNET 1977; CARR, FRANCIS, RIVLIN, STONE 1993.

are subject to the judgement of others. It is therefore synonymous with common space, shared space, collective space or, as Lefebvre describes it, urban space.[2]

Urban space in a capitalist city is full of places for sharing: streets for shopping and strolling, squares with music stands and theatres. But these urban spaces also contain statues of politicians and businessmen, intellectuals and memorials. These works of art serve to preserve the events and figures of the past that the social and political elites consider most appropriate to explain their history and define their identity, and to assimilate them as part of the collective memory. In short, the urban space of the 19th and 20th centuries is the ideal platform for prioritising the collective memory of the hegemonic social group, taking stock of its own existence and configuring its identity. This group succeeds in consolidating its memory and transforming it into a collective one.[3]

In the 21st century, productivist technocracy (appropriating De Certeau's qualifier)[4] replaces the idea of urban space with public space, giving it a political dimension. For Delgado,[5] public space, in political language, is a construct in which each human being is recognized as such in relation to the others with whom he or she relates on the basis of permanent pacts. As a political discourse, and therefore as an ideological tool, public space functions as a mechanism through which the dominant class manages to exercise its power by obtaining the consent of the dominated classes, since it has achieved a consensus that transcends social classes. It is possible to prevent any form of resistance or appropriation of the street or square for the sake of the principle of 'good coexistence'.[6] In this context, there is a process of monopolisation of space by those who have the status of owners and consumers. And those who lack economic resources or belong to marginal social classes are excluded.[7] In order to guarantee order, the state controls, isolates and segregates anyone who poses a threat to the political model. These dangerous groups are those who do not conform to normativity (migrants, youth gangs) or those who exercise social resistance to break the social consensus, such as the squatter movement, the 15M, the anti-eviction movement or the feminist demonstrations (8M) or LGTBI+ Pride (Pride Week), which are organized every year on specific dates. This control is also exercised through urban planning: the redevelopment of areas through gentrification and

[2] LEFEBVRE 1969.
[3] REYERO 1999; REYERO 2009; GAS BARRACHINA 2020.
[4] DE CERTEAU 1980.
[5] DELGADO 2011.
[6] DELGADO, MALET 2015; MESA-PEDRAZA, DUQUE CALVACHE 2021.
[7] MAQUEDA ABREU 2015, p. 9.

the construction of enclosed housing estates; the prioritisation of tourism over the interests of residents; the appropriation of culture by cultural capitalism. Thanks to this model, culture becomes a tool for attracting investment and capital, promoting Disneyfication[8] and contributing to the processes of gentrification through the construction of large cultural infrastructures such as unsustainable museums,[9] the organisation of mass cultural events and the installation of public art in the most prominent streets and squares.[10]

Urban Art as Conflict and as Institutionalized Art

The origins of graffiti (and urban art) date back to the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Afro-American communities of Queens, the Bronx and Brooklyn, in New York City. It arrived in Spain in the 1980s, specifically in the cities of Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao and Zaragoza.[11]

The situation of urban art today in Spain seems paradoxical: while some artists practise it in semi-secrecy and are criminalized and persecuted, the administrations of certain cities promote institutionalized urban art as an instrument of social cohesion. Large Spanish industrial cities (Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Avilés, among others), as a result of the processes of deindustrialization suffered from the 1980s onwards, are undergoing processes of major urban regeneration. Thus, Bilbao developed its Bilbao Ría 2000 plan, and Barcelona transformed its working-class neighbourhoods with various large-scale projects such as the Forum of Cultures or 22@ in the Poblenou district. To this must be added major cultural events such as the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona or the Universal Exposition of the same year in Seville.[12] In all cases, these events and processes of renovation have given rise to speculation and tourism, and have led to the acceptance of a new model of city: the global city. In short, cities are placed 'at the service of capitalist territorial planning and real estate production'.[13]

In this urban context, tags are criminal acts and graffitists and artists are punished for leaving their mark on certain monuments in the city or in certain neighbourhoods. In Barcelona and Madrid, and subsequently in other Spanish cities, a policy of zero tolerance towards graffiti and its authors has been developed. In both cities, street cleaning regulations have been approved by the environmental departments: in Madrid, the 'Bylaw for the cleaning of public

[8] ZUKIN 1995; URZUA BASTIDA 2012.
[9] KRAUSS 1990; MARTÍNEZ 2022; VAN AALST, BOOGAARTS 2002.
[10] MAQUEDA ABREU 2015; ARMAS 2019.
[11] FIGUEROA 2013; BALLAZ 2009.
[12] RUBIO 2022.
[13] DELGADO 2011, p. 19.

spaces and management of waste' (2009) and in Barcelona, the 'Bylaw of Measures to Promote and Ensure the Sharing of Public Space' (2005). These bylaws criminalize graffiti and have increased sanctions. Not only do they provide for the eradication of graffiti because it tarnishes the image of streets, squares and public monuments, but they also expel from public space any element of dissent against the speculative politics it represents. In this way, the opposition of a section of society to these policies is made invisible.[14]

But this regulation is at odds with the emergence of the urban as the cultural engine of postmodernism. The crisis of 2008 brought with it a deterioration of the social fabric of the big cities, and the discontent that this crisis and its solutions generated in the most affected social sectors triggered the 15M mobilisations. This movement, and others that followed in its wake, fuelled the debate on the use of public space and the need for citizens to be active agents. However, the arrival of the Partido Popular (Popular Party) in the Spanish government put the brakes on this process of occupation of public space with the approval of the Organic Law for the Protection of Citizen Security (Ley Mordaza, 2015). A repressive tool of the state to persecute dissent.

Urban art loses its force as a dissenting element and is increasingly employed as an instrument for the social and aesthetical regeneration of the urban landscape of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Urban art festivals organized by local councils abound such as Asalto Festival (Zaragoza), Desordes Creativas (Ordes, A Coruña); Gargar Festival, (Penelles, Lleida) or art fairs such as Urvanity Art in Madrid. With the intention to involve the residents themselves in ways to enhance the neighbourhood projects like Paisaje Tetuán in Madrid are set up. Faced with this situation, some urban artists continue to practice a 'more militant art', promoting through their work the awakening of the collective conscience and the mobilisation of the city's inhabitants. One of their objectives is, according to Ricardo Klein, to provoke, through artistic-street interventions in the public space, an argumentative shift in the city in the quest for a collective social transformation and change.[15] In this way, for example, the urban art of Barcelona is still very much linked to social movements, especially those who work against urban speculation, or in Madrid with the feminist movement and their claims.

[14] FIGUEROA 2013, p. 389; BALLAZ 2009, p. 132.
[15] KLEIN 2018, p. 129.

Women's occupation of public space can be traced back throughout the 20th century, but the fourth wave of feminism[16] presents a new political language of mobilisation and occupation, characterized in part by the movement's presence on the streets and in social networks.[17] The annual #8M demonstrations in Spain are one of the actions that give it the most sustained visibility. But it also carries out more specific actions, such as those that took place after the verdict in the La Manada case (2018).[18] The verdict, which sentenced the five men accused of assaulting a young woman during the San Fermín festival to new years in prison for sexual abuse (and not rape), provoked a reaction of support for the victim through rallies in several cities in Spain. Both the call and the demonstrations generated a series of slogans that were later reproduced on city walls. This kind of communication assumes the primacy of the social over the individual. It is no longer just a young woman who is attacked, but the collective of women who take to the streets also feel that they are victims of a justice system and a system in which patriarchal structures prevail. These public expressions serve to make visible the demands and problems of the women's collective. As well as these occupations of public space, feminist discourse is present in several ways on the streets, including murals and graffiti. All of these actions express the problems and discontent of women and form part of the process of constructing the identity of the feminist movement. Through them, they politicize public spaces and break down the structure built up by those in power. Generally, these actions refer to the more important themes on the feminist agenda: psychological, physical and sexual violence, patriarchal justice and visibility of non-normative bodies.

An unidentified collective in Zaragoza (Spain) uses stickers to spread slogans encouraging women to defend themselves: 'Rebélate mujer' (Rebel, woman), exhorting men to behave respectfully towards women: 'Hombre no violes' (Man, do not rape), or denouncing prostitution as an act of violence against the female body: 'Si pagas violas' (If you pay, you rape). In this sense, the stencil: 'Machete al macho' (Machete to the macho) perfectly sums up this attitude of encouraging women to defend themselves. However, one of the most resounding actions denouncing gender violence and its consequences is the campaign organized by the collective Asamblea Feminista Panteras based in Madrid, which painted the

[16] SISINO 2018; OFFEN, FERRANDIS 1991; AGUILAR 2020; ARRUZZA, BHATTACHARYA 2019.
[17] FIGUERAS 2020; PUECH 2015; VÁZQUEZ 2019.
[18] 'Cronología del caso la manada: de la denuncia por violación a la condena por abusos sexuales', in *elDiario.es* [website] 25 April 2018, <https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/cronologia-manada_1_2152712.html>, accessed 4 April 2023.

walls of the city with the names of the victims of femicide including their age, town or city, and the date of their death, under the title 'Vivas nos queremos' (We want ourselves alive).[19] This slogan also refers to the struggles associated with the disappeared victims of trafficking. This visual record goes beyond a claim as it actually transforms public space into a space of memory.[20] The collective Vagas y Maleantes (Zaragoza), which identifies themselves as LGBTTTQQIAA+ (lesbian, queer, bi, trans, and other radical vaga), convince trans and gay people of the political nature of their claims: 'cuerpos disidentes y política' (dissenting bodies and politics) or 'tortillera, politiza tu rabia' (dyke, politicize your rage). This latter case re-signifies the word 'tortillera' from an insult to a term they want to reappropriate.

Other issues on the feminist agenda that appear on the streets are those related to patriarchal justice that far from helping to solve problems of violence against women, makes them even worse. The phrase 'Endurecer las penas de cárcel no te protégé, esta justicia es patriarcal' (Harsher prison sentences won't protect you, this is patriarchal justice) alludes to the fact that prison sentences are permanently under review for certain killers, yet action is not taken forcefully against other crimes such as sexual harassment. Other slogans talk about women's working capacities: 'Las chicas hacemos casas y robots' (Girls build houses and robots) or about the difficulties for equality in the workplace: '1 ascensor para el hombre. 844 escalones para la mujer' (1 lift for men. 844 steps for women) with a QR code that links to the short film *Octavo Piso* (*Eighth Floor)* by Elma Palomar and Liena Vicén (2000) where they reflect on the glass ceiling (fig. 1). In the majority of these cases, it is a single word, or it is superimposed on an image with a more decorative than semantic function. However, in a series of anonymous posters from 2014, image and text form a semantic unit. They show the image of a little girl with a challenging expression (narrowed eyes, pursed lips and closed fists) and it is accompanied by the equally challenging text: 'Ya basta de acoso callejero. Nuestra paciencia ha terminado. Las calles son nuestras. ¡Cuidado, cerdos chovinistas!' (We've had enough of street harassment. Our patience has ended. The streets are ours. Watch out, you chauvinist pigs!). Both, image and text, are moving in the same direction to reinforce the message: women are ready to take over the public space using the word 'ours' and the figure of the little girl, emphasising the activism of the younger generations.

[19] Asamblea Feminista Panteras (Madrid) [website], < https://femiagenda.org/portfolio/asamblea-feminista-panteras/>, accessed 4 April 2023.
[20] TOLONEN 2021.

The photo poster 'Si tocas a una, nos tocas a todas' (If you touch one of us, you touch all of us -#sitocasaunanostocasatodas) by the artist Sara Batuecas focuses on sexual harassment. The series consists of eighteen photographs of women being assaulted. The Madrid-based artist began this photographic project to reflect the pain suffered by women who are harassed, which coincides with the powerlessness she feels in the face of the 'Pack' verdict (2018). These images express her anger at society's indifference to these common and serious events. The project was initially promoted on Instagram, but was censored for its violent content. That's why the artist decided to take it to the streets of the Malasaña and Lavapiés neighbourhoods in Madrid. The artist put up the posters at night, and by the next morning most of them had been torn down. This action is a counter-reaction to the message of the images, which are torn down after being put up.[21] The presence of these posters disturbed the public space by making male violence visible. It is as if the event is not allowed to become news or visible in public space (figs. 2-3). In other cases, the message was manipulated by adding a word that completely changed its meaning: 'Rebelate mujer' (Rebel woman) is manipulated into 'rebelate contra la mujer' (Rebel against woman).

The Galician graffiti artist Lupita Hard, who specializes in visual arts and poetry, decided to paint the female genitalia over and over again in order to reclaim female freedom and the female body. Her work is usually controversial and censored with offensive words and insults painted over it. But instead of removing these insults, she writes her answers next to them, transforming the meaning of the insult. The same artist participated in an urban art festival organized by Vigo City Council in the Churruca district in 2021. The artistic interventions include the painting of urban furniture (lampposts, planters and bins) with the aim of creating an open-air art space. Lupita Hard has painted several lampposts with pastels and black drawings of naked bodies, with different messages such as 'Lo que hago molesta porque tu cabeza lo pervierte' (What I do bothers you because your head undermines it), 'Amor libre' (Free love), 'Apaga el fuego que quema y enciende el que arde' (Put out the fire outside and light the one burning inside you). Her intervention was severely criticized by the Partido Popular (Spanish Popular Party), with some residents saying that the messages were 'a

[21] 'Fotoprotesta contra la violencia machista en San Andrés', in *elDiario.es* [website], 1 October 2018, <https://www.eldiario.es/madrid/somos/malasana/fotoprotesta-contra-la-violencia-machista-en-san-andres_1_6423363.html>, accessed 4 April 2023; MBOMÍO Lucia, 'No busco caricias sino verdad', in *Pikara Magazine* [website], 10 February 2021, <https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2021/02/no-busco-caricias-sino-verdad/>, accessed 4 April 2023.

disgrace and a lack of respect' because of their 'sexual, vindictive and provocative slogans'.[22] As a result, the artist was insulted and harassed while painting them and subsequently on social media. In the end, some of her work was vandalized (fig. 4).

In this and other cases, we can see that certain sectors of the Spanish political right are promoting a 'culture war', to use the term coined by sociologist James Davison Hunter,[23] in which the feminist movement is at the centre of the debate. Transferring this culture war to the wall, we can see how, in the face of the respect for dialogue that writers sometimes maintain with replies and counter-replies, some of these graffiti and murals are simply crossed out, nullifying the opinion of the other and turning the wall into a scenario of political censorship. This situation is confirmed by the attitude of extreme right-wing groups towards the presence of feminist murals in various cities in Spain. The demonstrations for the 8th of March in 2021 were not allowed because of the pandemic, and the feminist movement decided to celebrate it by creating murals that were subsequently attacked. That happened in different Spanish cities (Huelva, Gandía, and Seville), although there were a highest number of attacks in Madrid, both in some neighbourhoods (Ciudad Lineal or Colmenarejo) and in nearby towns (Alcalá de Henares, Getafe). The mural entitled *Pioneras* (*Pioneers*, 2021) in Vigo is an example of this situation. Located on Gran Vía street, it was a tribute to seven Galician women: Rosario Hernández, La Calesa, a socialist murdered in a Falange barracks in 1936; Urania Mella, a piano teacher and pioneer of women's associationism; the gynaecologist Olimpia Valencia, the first Galician woman to graduate in medicine; the philanthropist and photographer Corona González Santos; the teacher, nurse, journalist, and guerrilleira Placeres Castellanos; Saladina, a trans woman; and Carmen González, A Picona, a healer who facilitated abortions for women in her area. A few days after it was painted, was vandalized with graffiti such as 'Stop feminazis' appeared and were later repeated with the message: 'Foreign rapists, feminist silence'. Undoubtedly, the mural which represents the best example of political confrontation is that of 'La union hace la fuerza' (Strength through unity) on the sports centre in Concepción, in Madrid's Ciudad Lineal district. The mural was painted in 2018 by the Unlogic Crew as part of the municipal programme Sharing Walls with the slogan 'Las capacidades no dependen de tu género' (Abilities don't depend on your gender). It features fifteen women

[22] '¿Desexualización de la mujer o provocación? Las farolas que levantan la polémica en Vigo', in *Metropolitano* [website], 13 September 2021, <https://metropolitano.gal/enfoque/desexualizacion-de-la-mujer-o-provocacion-las-farolas-que-levantan-la-polemica-en-vigo/>, accessed 4 April 2023.

[23] DAVISON 1991.

who have made history for various reasons. The proposal was part of a participatory process implemented by the Madrid Mayor Manuela Carmena (2015-2019). The city council created local committees for each district to decide together the activities that each neighbourhood wanted to do. After the mural was approved, the Unlogic Crew collective presented two sketches for the residents to choose from. Subsequently, the selected sketch was approved by all the political groups that represented the city and the district at that time. The fifteen women featured included: Rosa Parks, Frida Kahlo, Gata Cattana, Nina Simone, Liudmila Pavlichenko, Federica Montseny, Comandanta Ramona, Emma Stone, Kanno Sugako, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Valentina Tereshkova, Angela Davis, Rosa Arauzo, Lucía Sánchez Saornil and Rigoberta Menchú. Once approved, the neighbourhood collaborated in painting it, as a multi-cultural, community project. This situation of consensus changed radically when the extreme right party Vox joined the Madrid city council. In the Municipal meeting of the district of Ciudad Lineal in January 2021 Vox proposed to repaint the mural with men and women playing Paralympic sports. It said that the original mural was a 'political message that had nothing to do with sport'[24] and criticized what it called 'sectarian hate of Más Madrid and the PSOE for opposing this initiative'.[25] The People's Party then weighed in that the mural against male violence equated to 'sectarianism' and did not represent the 'plural sensitivities' of the district. Finally, the Ciudadanos group said that the mural had a 'very specific ideology'[26] that did not match the objective of the fight against male violence as it contained figures like Frida Kahlo who 'was in a notoriously toxic relationship'[27] with Diego Rivera. This situation caused many associations to protest outside the Municipal meeting with the slogan 'Don't touch the mural' and started up a petition for it to be maintained. 'The mural is not just a mural anymore, it represents not only the feminist fight of these 15 women, but of the residents and more than 55,000 of us who have signed this petition to demonstrate, as its name indicates, 'Strength through unity'.[28] Although the mural did not disappear, it was attacked on several occasions. In March 2021, all the faces were covered with black paint,

[24] 'Vox sigue con sus borrados sectarios, ahora toca un mural feminista', in *Nueva Tribuna* [website], 22 January 2021, <https://www.nuevatribuna.es/articulo/sociedad/madrid-vox-sigue-borrados-sectarios-ahora-toca-mural-feminista/20210122121030183712.html>, accessed 4 April 2023.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] 'Y la unión hizo la fuerza: El mural feminista que el Ayuntamiento de Madrid quiso borrar se queda y sus 15 mujeres son hoy más visibles', in *Feminismo Rural* [website], 27 January 2021, <https://www.femeninorural.com/y-la-union-hizo-la-fuerza-el-mural-feminista-que-el-ayuntamiento-de-madrid-quiso-borrar-se-queda-y-sus-15-mujeres-son-hoy-mas-visibles-que-nunca/>, accessed 4 April 2023.

although hours later, it was reconstructed by residents of the neighbourhood with posters and photos. In June 2022, it features phrases such as 'Muerte al fascismo morado' (Death to purple fascism) and 'Justicia para los hombres valientes' (Justice for brave men, fig. 5).

All of this needs to be contextualized in the strategy of culture war against the progressive values that Vox has been pursuing since it joined the institutions. In this way, thus, they tried to remove from Madrid's public space not only feminist murals or murals in recognition of women, but also other illustrious figures of left-wing ideology. An example of this was the removal of the plaque in tribute to Francisco Largo Caballero (1869-1946) in Plaza de Chamberí, or the attempt to erase the names of Largo Caballero and Indalecio Prieto (1883-1962), both prominent Socialist Party politicians during the Second Republic (1931-1939), from the Madrid street map. The attitude towards these murals reflects the symbolic violence that the right-wing extremism manifests against the feminist movement. But this is part of a wider war against everything represented by the left wing and its social values.

In short, walls are the main urban elements that determine and limit a landscape. They are inert elements that come in a variety of types: building walls, garden walls, façades, stone walls and partition walls. From the first spontaneous graffiti to today's urban projects, artistic wall contributions affect a city's landscape and aesthetics and as a result, the lives of the people living there. Walking down an unfamiliar street is not the same as walking down a street in which an image or poem calls out to you to stop, look and reflect on the artist's message. 'Cities are a creative stage that encourages relationship dynamics and exchanges between those that make street art and those inhabiting the public space.'[29] However, as a result of the culture war, these urban stages are also the battleground for ideologies. This situation can be seen in the damage inflicted on the murals paying tribute to women that appeared in Spanish cities for International Women's Day in 2021. Some have been repainted by the residents. Others are created to pay homage to those that have been defaced. Collective murals or graffiti awaken feelings of belonging among communities. The wall that seemingly belonged to nobody acquires another life and its inhabitants, painters and spectators consider the art to be theirs. The painting is a reminder and a testimony of the sum of individual efforts to achieve a common goal: teamwork, negotiations and agreements reached through assertive dialogue culminate in a creative and playful action such as mural painting. This is the only

[29] KLEIN 2018, p. 134.

way to explain the response to a seemingly minor initiative (replacing one mural with another) by a political group that wanted to remove a neighbourhood wall.

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Fig. 1 Unidentified collective, Stickers with slogans on the streets of Spanish cities (on the left the sticker '1 ascensor para el hombre. 844 escalones para la mujer').
Photo: Pilar Biel Ibáñez

Fig. 2 Sara Batuecas, #sitocasaunanostocasatodas, mural 3 x 3 m. Exhibition Conde Duque, Madrid.
Source: Instagram Sara Batuecas

Fig. 3 Sara Batuecas, #sitocasaunanostocasatodas, Malasaña neighbourhood, Madrid.
Source: Pikara Magazine

Fig. 4 Lupita Hard, The female genitalia, changes of the mural, Vigo, 2018.
Source: Lupita Hard

Fig. 5 Unlogic Crew, The mural *La union hace la fuerza*, Ciudad Lineal neighbourhood, Madrid, 2023.
Photo: Jorge Jimenez Lopez

Condemned Spaces: Martin Wong and Carceral Aesthetics

Ravinder S. Binning

I.

Four unidentified flying objects cut across a black sky, adding a humorous touch to an otherwise foreboding scene (fig. 1). Below the saucers is a white structure. On it, each brick appears carefully outlined, giving texture to an otherwise blunt monolith. As the eye moves around the picture, it becomes clear that this is not a single structure but an entire complex, one concealed only partially by fencing and wall. The solid black wall divides the picture plane, barring visual entry into the complex while projecting different textures. This texture becomes varied the more that we gaze: poles and bars contrast with the coiling barbed wire around which they wrap. Affixed to the wall at the foreground, a pole terminates with two surveillance cameras. These cameras, raised up like insignia on a battle staff, draw us to imagine other, hidden presences in the complex. They appear on the same diagonal plane as the huge black tower in the background, perhaps another surveilling structure. The composition's diagonal thrust positions the complex in a way that threatens to extend out of the picture plane but a text in the background breaks the illusion: *47-04*. This nocturnal scene is a 1992 painting (71.12 x 177.8 cm) by the late American artist Martin Wong (1946-1999).[1] Completed in New York City two years before his final return and subsequent death in San Francisco, *47-04* is perhaps the most complete depiction of a major preoccupation for Wong: prisons.

Wong tells us as much in a 1996 interview. After being asked about 'classic themes' in his work, the painter responds simply, 'bricks and jails'.[2] For a volume on the connection between graffiti art and prisons, there can hardly be a more fitting artist. As this essay explores, in his 1980s works, the two worlds merge. But this relationship is not so simple as one of, say, capturing graffiti as it was occurring. I will argue that within Wong's painterly practice, there is an impulse to prod at forbidden spaces and expose architectural conditions otherwise ignored in the visual field. This exposure constitutes an act of re-claiming, of re-distributing the significance of buildings and

[1] Most recently, GRUIJHTHUIJSEN, RUBIO, 2022.
[2] RAMIREZ 2015, p. 116; GETSY 2022, pp. 178-198.

bodies otherwise condemned. This is a process quite similar to the graffiti writer's treatment of space and urban matter.

Before discussing his picturing of prisons, however, we begin with Wong's relationship to graffiti. This relationship begins before his New York period; in the 70s, Wong was already active in Northern California counterculture, collaborating with groups like the Angels of Light Free Theatre.[3] And already in this period, his works attest to an interest in the stylization and materiality of written script. This interest appears in several works on paper and even stoneware. Some reference Chinese art history directly through the exploration of calligraphy, red stamps, and the scroll as medium (*Once Upon a Jewel in the Left Eye of Cassiopeia*, 1971).[4] His interest in graffiti began truly in 1978, however, when he moved to the Lower East Side or *Loisaida* as it was known to its Puerto Rican population. By then, the practice of graffiti was in its second generation.[5] In his surrounds far downtown on Ridge Street, Wong would have encountered this artform first-hand, well before the American public would learn of it through the 1983 PBS program, *Style Wars*.[6] Soon, Wong became an insatiable collector of traces of the burgeoning art form. The celebrated graffiti writer Christopher 'Daze' Ellis recounts in a 2019 interview that Wong was never painting trains or engaging in the practice's vandal side:

> He was not interested in going out and doing illegal activities. From the beginning, Martin was looking at the work as fine art and a valued form of expression. I think he often told me that he looked at himself as the Albert Barnes of graffiti, because at that time Europeans were collecting it; New Yorkers, however, were not really supportive of it. There was always this illegal activity stigma that was attached to it, which created problems. Like Barnes, he saw the opportunity to swoop in and get really representative paintings during a period that really was not mainstream or popular.[7]

Wong's self-refence to Barnes here is telling. In 1989, Wong established the short-lived Museum of Graffiti on Bond Street. Later, the artist told an audience at the San Francisco Art Institute on 20 February, 1991 that he had what some considered the largest collection of New York graffiti, comprising '150 graffiti paintings and 80 piece books'.[8] Piece books or notebooks were, in some respects, Wong's most prized objects. As sketch pads for tags, the piece books were like the writer's diaries or rough drafts, the most immediate windows into a practice always threatened

[3] For a recent treatment of his California period, KWON 2022, pp. 48-64.
[4] Ibid, p. 86.
[5] CORCORAN and MCCORMICK 2013, pp. 228-233.
[6] Ibid, pp. 6-33.
[7] GRUIJHTHUIJSEN, RUBIO and ELLIS 2022, p. 235.
[8] WONG 2015, p. 100.

to disappear.[9] But Wong's amassing of writer's pads and physical works attest to what many have viewed as a broader priority in his work: the preservation and exposure of private or underground worlds, and their forms of 'arcana, secret languages, and private codes'.[10]

Throughout the 1980s, Wong recorded graffiti's semi-anonymous traces in a variety of ways. He portrayed key writers from the scene but also graffiti itself in the rapidly decaying surrounds of the Lower East Side. The private microcosms of downtown architecture and graffiti cohere in a few works. One is 1988's *La Vida,* a tableau of different portraits framed in brick tenement blocks. The painting positions viewers as voyeurs into anonymous, block housing units. Different interiors appear and we see drumming and dancing as well as writers Daze, Sharp, LA 2, and Lee.[11] But these writers appear alongside other neighborhood figures like policemen, street musicians, as well as the poet of New York street life, Miguel Piñero (1946-1988).

It was Piñero who, as Wong once recounts, 'pretty much introduced the neighborhood to me as subject matter'.[12] Piñero would become a friend, lover, and collaborator as well as a gateway into another concealed world, prison.[13] Like the visceral immediacy of a graffiti tag, Piñero's Nuyorican poetics captured Loisaida communication in all of its textured form: Yasmin Ramirez elegantly characterizes, 'Piñero introduced the painter [Wong] to the Nuyorican way of working with language, a poetry directly inspired by the hybrid patterns heard in the streets, an aesthetic that showcased the poet's ability to amplify the significance of ordinary verbal encounters'.[14] The place of language in Wong's street scenes from the 1980s reflect the influence of Nuyorican poetics, a dialect that emerged uniquely from the city's staging of multi-cultural collision. Of all his early-1980s works, one exposes the Lower East Side as a space in which different private languages, including graffiti, co-mingle: *Attorney Street Handball Court* of 1982-1984. The work is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's permanent collection. In *Attorney Street Handball Court*, Wong combines Piñero's Nuyorican verse (at the frame), Loisaida architecture, sign language, and several graffiti tags. What emerges is a microcosm of language and architecture.

[9] CORCORAN, MCCORMICK 2013, pp. 142-226.
[10] AULT 2015, pp. 83-96, 85.
[11] RAMIREZ 2015, p. 33.
[12] Ibid, p. 41.
[13] Ibid, p. 116.
[14] RAMIREZ 2015, p. 41.

We may view *Attorney Street Handball Court*, then, as a portrait of graffiti in-situ. But in another respect, this work is an early example of something that Wong would explore in the years to come: painting's ability to capture condemned architecture and spaces of anonymity, and thus, serve as immediate documentation.[15] After all, handball often serves as prison recreation.

II.

Most view Wong's engagement with both bricks and jails - graffiti and prison - at the level of representational content. To be sure, he has been celebrated as capturing street scenes and spaces, developing an urban flaneur's iconography. However, there is another factor perhaps inspired by so much contact with graffiti in Wong's late-80s formalism. That factor regards not just the immediacy and speed in the act of documentation, Wong's self-identification as a 'human instamatic'. Instead, Wong's paintings share with the graffiti act a prodding at boundaries. Even if Wong did not participate in the graffiti artists' vandalism, his paintings reach for a re-organization or, at the very least, an inquiry into the body's relationship to space and confinement. And further, both Wong and graffiti artists engage the boundaries of anonymity, specifically, how anonymity and identity can be de-constructed and remade by walls, fences, and barriers. This prodding at boundaries marks one of Wong's great contributions: painting as a means of rendering carceral boundaries into heightened forms of visibility.

In making this argument, I am offering a different dimension to discussions on Wong's carceral visuality than the one so powerfully addressed by critics, namely Wong's vision of prison as spaces of homoerotic fantasy.[16] There can be no doubt that, essential to Wong's 1980s works was the sexualized vision of prison space.[17] Art historians have even viewed Wong's treatment of surfaces as evocative of queer relationality: David Getsy brilliantly says of this aspect of Wong's work 'any two bricks can form a bond, and it is a queer stance to value relations not determined by preconceived binary differences'.[18] For Getsy, bricks become metaphors for real bodies fitting together in new social configurations. However, I would like to explore another way that Wong draws a parallel between walls and bodies, one that follows expands an argument made by

[15] The occasion for the painting was for Wong to document a freshly-painted throw up by Piñero's friend, Little Ivan, ibid, pp.37-38.
[16] Most recently GETSY 2022, pp. 178-198.
[17] Ibid., pp. 178-194.
[18] Ibid., p. 197.

Antonio Sergio Bessa 'Wong's paintings of prisons and condemned architecture around the Lower East Side seem invested of a sociohistorical import'.[19] In these works, Wong's framing of architecture and anonymity tends less toward *eros* and more towards *thanatos*—that is, towards an aesthetics of decay, of erasure.

This parallel emerges in a series of works from the mid-1980s. They mark a departure from the playful treatments of urban space found in his earlier Loisaida series. By 1986, Wong executed a series that reproduces with near-photographic exactitude the textures of derelict or decaying storefronts. These paintings appeared in third show at the Semaphore Gallery, the *Last Picture Show*, from 27 September to 25 October, 1986. In the Semaphore show, the storefronts of the Lower East Side, especially those with bilingual signage such as the sublime *la Iglesia de Dios* or the *Iglesia Pentecostal* (fig. 2), appear flattened to canvasses. Another work, *Houston Street*, also typifies the strategies (fig. 3).

The canvas on *Houston Street* doubles as a rusting, oxidized roll-up storefront door. Made of either aluminum or steel, these walls pull down to protect the storefront. Chains and lock appear on the side, evoking the cold materiality of industrialized protection. As metallic cases for a building, they render architecture anonymous. Anyone in New York City can recognize these steel gates as they are so ubiquitous that we might call them part of the city's architectural unconscious. One encounters them at night when stores are closed. And thus often, these steel gates are used as canvasses for graffiti throw-ups. But in *Houston Street,* the noxious surface of the roll-up metal door is the subject itself. We are led to confront the obstructive wall in its rusting materiality. To paint such a ubiquitous surface was to document something fleeting and forgettable. This technique of dislocating anonymous architecture continued throughout the show. In the case of *Iglesia Pentecostal*, depicting a storefront on 25 Avenue B, the canvas effects basically a life-size (274 x 213 cm) reproduction of the storefront. This work is but one of a whole series depicting shutters, security gates, even closed, seemingly abandoned churches. The quotidian and mundane font on *Iglesia Pentecostal*'s signage names an anonymous figure, 'Rev. Roberto Vasques'. The combination of rough, oxidized surfaces with a name in the top register makes for an eerie effect: the depiction of the store front, in all of its flatness, doubles, for both the building and the reverend, as an epitaph. In an equally strange sense, the reverend's name

[19] BESSA 2015, p. 23.

assumes the anonymity of a graffiti tag. It is a sign of identity detached from a real body. Like a graffiti tag, the painted name addresses no one in particular; its presence on an abandoned storefront congeals into the building's decaying surface. Wong's process here is similar to excising and translocating a piece of wall into the gallery—a technique used for preservation of fresco but also graffiti. Thus, Wong's Semaphore paintings attempt to dislocate architectural decay itself so as to memorialize these buildings' ephemerality. These works are complex treatments of architecture and anonymity: if it were not for the fact that the work bears the toponym *Houston Street*, the painting would be presenting a piece of architecture as though a nameless body. This optical effect of flattening the wall into two-dimensions place matter, buildings, and bodies (signified by the name) all under a condition of anonymous decay. And this optical effect is another critical component in Wong's treatment of the carceral: that bodies and buildings could fuse in a condition of disposability and condemnation, a kind of 'bare life'.[20] Regarding the Semaphore works, Wong basically tells us about this parallel between building and body, anthropomorphizing the anonymous architecture 'and you know if these walls could only speak, they'd probably be subpoenaed'.[21] At the same time, the paintings are serving to salvage. They are fighting against the condition of condemnation and anonymity by constructing a new space for memory.

III.

Wong continued the effect of optical flattening and the exploration of carcerality and memory in his later works of prison space itself. An excellent example is *C-76, Junior* from 1988 (fig. 4). Indeed, the same attention to corrosive matter and the flattening of space in *Iglesia Pentecostal* appears in *C-76, Junior*. But to what end? Again, at one level the painting conveys Wong's transformation of prison as a space for voyeurism.[22] However, there are also connections between his prison works and the Semaphore series. There is a shift: in *C-76, Junior* now, real, anonymous body appear flattened and co-extensive with prison space.

What does it mean to render a body co-extensive with space? For just as a shuttered security gate pervades *Iglesia Pentecostal,* cell bars chart an obstructive geometry across *C-76*'s pictorial field.

[20] AGAMBEN 1998.
[21] RUBIO 2015, p. 155.
[22] GETSY 2022, p. 186.

And just as the sharp security gate of *Iglesia Pentecostal* seems to rust, so too do the bars and steel of *C-76* appear corrosive. In *C-76*'s top register, a *trompe l'oeil* effect emerges that breaks the picture's construction of depth. The acidic, metallic splotch of paint fuses background with foreground, as if a noxious cloud is dwelling above the inmate's head. The cloudy metal effects a flattening. Thus, like *Iglesia Pentecostal*'s invocation of an anonymous name on an architectural surface, *C-76*'s visual field fuses the anonymous body to carceral matter. The body becomes camouflaged into the space.

Antonio Sergio Bessa writes evocatively of Wong's carceral pictures, calling Wong's treatment of disciplinary spaces as a consistent, even obsessive 'architectural configuration'.[23] Bessa also says that, 'Wong's architectural repertoire, to paraphrase Foucault, establishes 'sealed compartments between individuals, but also apertures for continuous surveillance'.[24] Undoubtedly, this statement cuts to the content of many his scenes, especially the disintegrating Loisaida landscapes. But in the case of *C-76, Junior*, carceral materialism - the corrosion of the bars, the mundane white sheets rendering the body anonymous - make us aware of our viewing position as peering into what would otherwise be hidden or disappearing. The effects expose a paradox of the carceral condition. Typically, we associate the actualization of carceral surveillance as a perpetual control over the visible field.[25] But here, Wong is striking on something else: how carceral matter can construct the conditions of invisibility as well.

Like so many of Wong's other works, *C-76, Junior* discloses the hidden. The painting exposes, perhaps mischievously so, a grim paradox of an invisible life in parallel time. And this exposure is not simply a matter of depicting the incarcerated body. Parallel, neglected time reveals itself in that abstract splotch of swirling metallic paint, a trace of the cell's decay. And that same effect that we find in the Semaphore works - flattening architecture into two-dimensions - constructs an experience of vision's limits. The exposure of the surface effects an optical shallowness. And this exposure of the surface frames the cell as a screen against which our gaze can only partially penetrate. Thus, *C-76, Junior* frames how the carceral structures the visual experience of depth

[23] BESSA 2015, p. 22.
[24] Ibid., p. 22.
[25] Michel Foucault writes, 'hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power', in FOCAULT 2008, p. 6.

itself. But again, by drawing attention to this visual depth (or lack thereof), painting itself becomes a form of intervention and access, of memorializing the otherwise invisible.

We might say this differently: just as he structured access into marginalized languages (including graffiti), Wong's paintings make the conditions of carceral visuality into the subject of disclosure. This disclosure aligns with how Nicole Fleetwood characterizes 'carceral aesthetics' as any practice that 'radically challenge the impenetrability of prison'.[26] Specifically, Wong's disclosure cuts to another aspect of what Fleetwood characterizes as carceral visuality, 'the power of the state to arrest and capture, to make visible and invisible, underscores the significance of visuality as a tool of state authority that structures who sees and what can be seen'.[27] Thus, Wong was not necessarily translating Foucault's conception of the panopticon or any theoretical conception of the carceral.[28] Rather, Wong's paintings frame carceral space—its structuring of visibility and gazes—in order to reclaim it as an object of memory and information. This is how they attain what Bessa argues is a critical 'sociohistorical' significance.

But perhaps the greatest exposure or challenge (albeit from the outside) of what Fleetwood calls the 'impenetrability of prison' occurs in *47-04,* the opening example. On *Houston Street* mentioned earlier we see something that re-emerges on *47-04*: in addition to bars and disciplinary or protective textures, there are points into which the gaze can penetrate. In *Houston Street*, the windows are at the top register of the security gate but there are similarly illusory spaces of partial access in the windows of *47-04*. There is a play between the invocation of an inner-space and a harsh, impenetrable surface. No matter how illusory, Wong's insistent framing of these voids and walls draw us to contemplate the nature of forbidden space, of the phenomenology of architectural limits. Painting renders these conditions partially knowable, if only through texture.

This sense of re-claiming the gaze in order to penetrate *into* prison cuts to the strategy of *47-04*. Arriving in 1992, *47-04* marks a change in Wong's picturing of prison spaces. For one, gone is the overt eroticism or framing of hardened male bodies. Instead, we are led to confront the phenomenology of not just one but several walls in their cold materiality. And while *47-04* was hardly Wong's first nocturnal scene of buildings, it is the first to reproduce a furtive, even

[26] FLEETWOOD 2020, p. 25.
[27] Ibid., p. 15
[28] BESSA 2015, p. 22, note 17.

dangerous sense of approach. Here we return to the practice of graffiti, in all of its freedom of breaking and entering, of redistributing access and space as property. For the work brings us very close to the foreboding wall where every coiling wire seems to threaten a kind of electric shock; and every headlight threatens to illuminate if we take another step. Nevertheless, Wong is allowing us to become the accomplice to an act of painterly trespassing at night.

But there is still another aspect of *47-07* that needs to be addressed: the stamped numbers at the painting's corner. The numbers refer to actual street numbers in Queens and thus, tie this building to a real site specifically, 47-04 Van Dam Street, the Queensboro Correctional Facility. Understood this way, *47-04* becomes less a space of fantasy and more a capture of an everyday carceral structure. It is done with the precision of a landscape painting. Fascinatingly, Wong imagined his works in precisely these terms. 'Basically, I am a Chinese landscape painter', Wong tells Yasmin Ramirez. 'If you look at Chinese landscapes in the museum they have writing in the sky'.[29] The capture of the urban surround as though a landscape was critical to Wong's self-understanding as an artist, to his sense of authorial autonomy. Wong's painting of the carceral surround in *47-04* frames prison's imposition in the city's atmosphere. Wong was not a carceral artist in the sense of making art within the penal system.[30] But from his position outside, from his *perspective,* he was able to capture surveillance and carcerality imposing and effecting the spaces of everyday life. For Wong, painting allowed for a breach and critical engagement with architectural limits, however fantastical, just like the best graffiti.

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[29] RAMIREZ 2015, p. 109.
[30] FLEETWOOD 2020, pp. 21-54.

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Fig. 1 Martin Wong, *47-04*, acrylic on canvas (71.1 x 177.8 cm), 1992.
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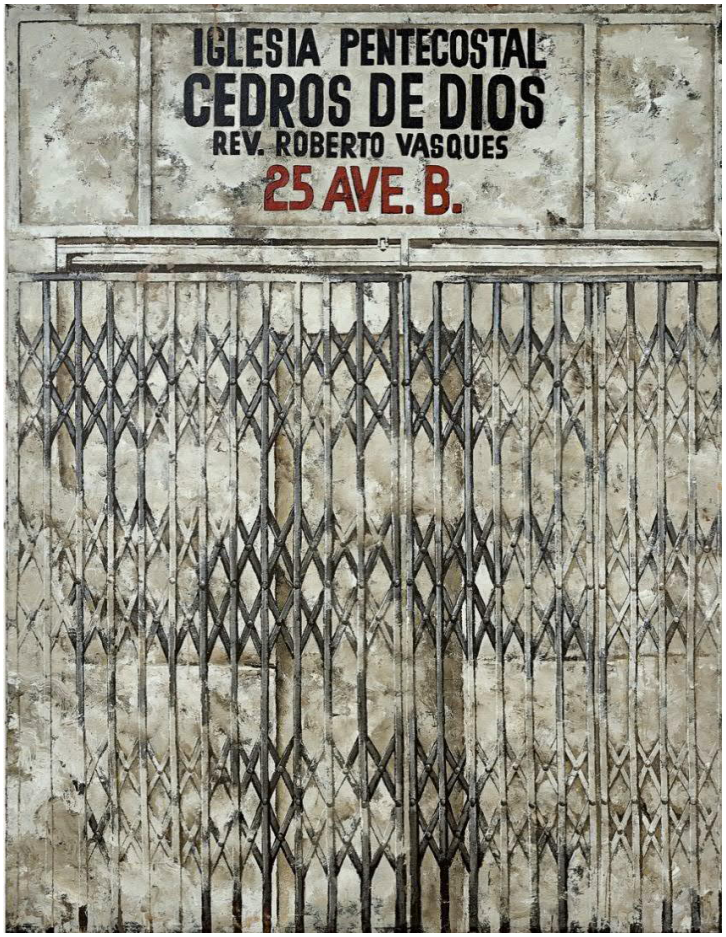

Fig. 2 Martin Wong, *Iglesia Pentecostal*, acrylic on canvas (274.3 x 213.4 cm), 1986.
Copyright Martin Wong Foundation. Courtesy Martin Wong Foundation and P·P·O·W, New York

Fig. 3 Martin Wong, *Houston Street*, acrylic on canvas (243.8 x 396.2 cm), 1986.

Fig. 4 Martin Wong, *C-76, Junior*, acrylic on canvas, (73.66 x 48.26 cm), 1988.

Free the Mind and Break Down Barriers with Art: GAP Project Workshops

Julia Kritsikokas

In Italy, spaces for creative expression and art therapy have been experimented with since the 1980s to promote the psychological and social rehabilitation of inmates. In prison, art therapy has the important task of stimulating the creativity and imagination of inmates. Educators, social workers but also researchers and academics with the help of artists and volunteer associations are increasingly using such tools to promote processes of social inclusion and rehabilitation. By analyzing the case provided by the workshops organized within the GAP Project, I would like to develop the issue of care through the artistic medium. My intention is to attest how this experience led to a process of inclusion and the breakdown of cultural and social barriers among artists, PhD students and inmates.

A Brief Legal Framework: The Penalty as Re-Educational Treatment in Italy

In Italy, it is since 1975 with Law No. 354 that imprisonment officially takes on the characteristics of re-educational treatment. With this law, people began to think of punishment as a process that must aim at empowering the positive aspects of the inmate's personality and correcting deviant aspects, focusing on a new conception of the prisoner, no longer considered as – 'a person to be guarded' - but as a person with a dignity to be respected and for whom to invest in re-education programs.[1] This law clashed with a difficult and unprepared prison reality, both in terms of structures and mentality: overcrowded prisons, dilapidated structures and insufficient coordination. This situation led to the promulgation of Law No. 663 of 1986, known as the Gozzini Law, which shifted the focus toward the use of outside resources. Community cooperation and participation was promoted, introducing more opportunities for prisoners to relate to the outside world and to establish or maintain

[1] Italian Prison Ordinance, Law 354/75 *Norme sull'ordinamento penitenziario e sull'esecuzione delle misure privative e limitative della libertà*. This law stipulates that prison treatment must conform to the criteria of humanity and ensure respect for the dignity of the individual. Above all, it establishes for inmates a re-educational treatment that tends, including by contacts with the outside world, to their social reintegration.

relationships. By the 1980s,[2] a series of conventions organized by inmates with the support of the Ministry took place.[3]

GAP Project Workshops: Art as a Therapeutic and Socialization Tool

Many studies have wondered about the relationship between art and therapy, care. Notable among the many are the studies of art therapist Tessa Dalley.[4] As Dalley explains 'art activity provides a concrete rather than verbal medium through which a person can achieve both conscious and unconscious expression, and can be used as a valuable agent for therapeutic change'.[5] According to Dalley, art can be recognized as having intrinsic 'therapeutic' qualities given by the fact that when a person, for example, paints, he/she experiences positive emotions of relax and pleasure. If the artistic activity is placed within a therapeutic setting it takes on a different character: the artistic value no longer lies in the final aesthetic product, but rather in the entire process. This process could be observed during the various workshops of the GAP Project: the painting workshops by artist Stefania Galegati at Pagliarelli, the street art created within the Sollicciano prison with artist David Mesguich and the creation of streetwear with inmates of the Malaspina juvenile prison with artist Elisa Giardina Papa.[6] In these workshops, the role of the creative process in stimulating human thought emerged, and PhD students, artists and inmates were able to get involved. Thus, mental and not just artistic activity took place, producing changes on the personalities of all involved in the workshops, in terms of both individual entity and in how they relate with others. Following the thinking of psychoanalyst Donald Winnicot, art therapy can also be regarded as a 'space of play':

> Playing facilitates growth and therefore health; playing leads into group relationships; playing can be a form of communication in psychotherapy; and, lastly, psychoanalysis has been developed as a highly specialized form of playing in the service of communication with oneself and others.[7]

Art becomes a game when it stimulates creativity and personal growth, generating well-being and health. Indeed, during the GAP Project workshops there were many playful moments such as the dance and crochet workshops with the artist Galegati: these activities established a

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[2] LOVATI 1988, pp. 27-44.
[3] Such as the one held in Rebibbia in June 1984, in conjunction with the performance of Sophocles' *Antigone* (actors, costume designers, set designers were all inmates, with direction and collaboration from RAI and volunteers).
[4]Author of *Art as Therapy* (1987), *Images of Art Therapy: New Developments in Theory and Practice* (1987), *The Handbook of Art Therapy* (1992), *Three Voices of Art Therapy: Image, Client, Therapist* (1993).
[5] DALLEY 1984, p. 8.
[6] The GAP Project workshops are presented and described by the artists in this volume in section 5.
[7] WINNICOT 2005, p. 56.

connection between PhD students and the female inmates of Pagliarelli, based on intimacy and confidence. Similar goals were achieved during the creative process of streetwear design (fig. 1) at Giardina Papa's and Mesguich's workshop. Following the thought of Winnicot, art therapy can be also defined as a 'potential space', that is, the place of creative living and cultural experience located in the potential space between the individual and the environment.[8] Picking up on Winnicot's thinking, Thomas Ogden clarifies that such space is:

> Between symbol and symbolized, mediated by an interpreting self, is the space in which creativity becomes possible and is the space in which we are alive as human beings, as opposed to being simply reflexively reactive beings. This is Winnicott's potential space.[9]

These activities, in addition to their therapeutic value, assumed a resocializing value, as the artistic process allowed for the development of relationships between inmates, artists and PhD students. In particular, the workshop curated by Galegati on cappelletti[10] showed a strong potential for aggregation, relationship and empathy. With imprisonment, the inmates are removed from their social context, and this removal represents a difficult barrier to break down, especially in the first encounters. Therefore, the dynamics that are activated in the preparation and in the eating of food turn out to be very significant for the creation of a connection. This is what happened during the cappelletti workshop, for the reason that, as Massimo Montanari argues, participating in a communal shared meal, the so-called *convivio,* actually represents a moment of community: 'on all social levels sharing a table is the first sign of membership in a group. That might be the family but also a broader community — each brotherhood, guild, or association reasserts its own collective identity at the table'.[11]

The action of cooking with inmates took on a communicative value, giving social meaning to the gestures made during the preparation and eating of the meal. Montanari illustrates that 'the very etymology of the word *convivio* suggests it, identifying living together (convivere) with eating together'.[12] Sharing a meal is, at all social levels, a sign of being part of a group such as the family first of all but also any social community affirms its collective identity at the table. Therefore, the opportunity created through the cappelletti workshop to share the same meal at the same table made possible the emergence of a sense of intimacy, of belonging, of

[8] Winnicot links this concept to play and early childhood experience, explaining that cultural experience begins with creative living that first manifests itself as play.
[9] OGDEN 1985, pp. 133.
[10] Cappelletti is a traditional type of stuffed egg pasta from Romagna (Italy) so called because of its characteristic shape resembling a hat.
[11] MONTANARI 2006, p. 96.
[12] Ibid., p. 94.

collectivity. The sharing of knowledge, both of the recipe itself and of the preparatory gestures, enabled a sharing of identity by making the process of establishing ties spontaneous, breaking down the initial social and cultural groups to which all involved in the workshop belonged in virtue of the creation of a new group. Thanks to the creative activities, spaces for important interaction were created and the effective reintegration of inmates into a social network that can support them and lead to the recovery of skills typical of the human condition: fun, laughter, sharing, and intimacy. Evidence of this is the fact that many inmates who participated in the workshops reported the desire of other inmates not admitted to the workshops to take part in them, but also the fact that at the end of the workshops a sense of nostalgia and missing the moments of relationship and recreation arose in all those involved. The socializing aspect of the workshops is central to the GAP Project. Prison, as a total institution, forces the inmate into a state of confinement that primarily affects the possibility of socialization and social inclusion, as Erwing Goffman explains:

> A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.[13]

The participation of PhD students as well as artists in the workshops made this process of social inclusion possible. Thanks to the art workshops founded on the collaboration of all those involved, the prison walls opened and it was possible to carry out a transformative process of breaking down any cultural and social barriers. Thanks to such workshops, it has been possible to provide a space for inmates to express themselves, through the two important mechanisms of listening and sharing. inmates have been able to express directly what they feel through their creativity and imagination, as psychologist Margaret Naumburg says 'images more easily escape repression by what Freud called the mind's censor than do verbal expressions'.[14] Thus, art indeed represents an important opportunity and resource within a total institution as restrictive and depriving as prison: the combined work between experts, artists, and researchers can realize experiences of art as therapy, healing, and socialization, in the name of interdisciplinarity that promotes social inclusion and improvement of the human condition of the incarcerated subject.

[13] GOFFMAN 1961, p. XXI.
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Fig. 1 Elisa Giardina Papa with Giovanna Fiume, 2022, Workshop on graffiti and writing on street-wear, Istituto Penale per Minorenni di Palermo 'Malaspina'

Traces, Roots, Routes: Carto-graffiti in the Black Mediterranean

Gabriella Palermo

Contemporary migration routes in the Mediterranean Sea are related to violent maps of exclusion and differentiated inclusion, reproduced through the construction of liquid borders.[1] At the same time, migrants' crossings are rewriting Europe's geography by drawing alternative cartographies to the dominant vision and relationships of power. Thus, these cartographies let both emerge coloniality's reproduction as a spatial relation of power, and track new paths of alternative politics, stories, relations, and futures. This ambivalence of forces emerges today through the materiality of a specific sea-space: the Black Mediterranean.[2] In this article, I will briefly focus on graffiti made by migrant people during the journey as traces that drawn stories in the different stages of the crossing.[3] Among names of people who have been there, names and drawings of cities and neighbourhoods, love poems or prayers, maps play a specific role. As a matter of fact, these graffiti inscriptions in the refugee camp, in the boat, in the hotspot, in the detention centre and in the lager, co-compose the counter-archive of the Black Mediterranean: alternative carto-graffiti that excavate interstices in our world as a *pris-de-mot* from the margin against the hegemonic and dominant narration. In their research about graffiti in transient migration, conducted at the border and in the self-organized camp of Ventimiglia, as well as in different camps and centres in Greece, the scholars Océane Uzureau, Marina Rota, Ine Lietaert and Ilse Derluyn identified four main functions for migrants' graffiti: as communication tool; as an expression of agency and control; as an expression of memories of the journey; as a means to reclaim identity within anonymity.[4] Among the several case-studies took in exam, they found in the DayCentre in Patras (Greece),

[1] See MORAÑA 2021.

[2] The Black Mediterranean is a maritime site of theories and practices that looks at the construction of the relationship between capitalism and the sea through the hierarchy of race, identified by Robinson (ROBINSON 1983) as a precondition of the Black Atlantic (GILROY 1993). If, then, the relation of racial capitalism developed in the pre-modern Mediterranean and in the modern Atlantic routes of slavery in the MiddlePassage, today this relation is developed in the contemporary Black Mediterranean through migration routes, thus emerging as a laboratory for the new forms of accumulation and exploitation of labour power. The selection of exclusionand inclusion is thus made by a Europe that in this sense becomes a fortress, managing life and death through the borders.At the same time, just as the Black Atlantic was a space of death, but also of memory, resistance, and counter-archives, today the Black Mediterranean is a space of violence, but also of possibility: of counter-subjectivities, counter-practices, counter-narratives. See DI MAIO 2012.

[3] This contribution draws from a broader reflection elaborated in my doctoral research thesis (PALERMO 2023).

[4] UZUREAU et al. 2022, p. 186.

graffiti that 'were related to the journey itself: maps were annotated with arrows to point out the trip so far and the destination'[5] as in the case of a map with alternative routes to Germany, Netherlands, and the sea (maybe to reach United Kingdom). A similar case concerns the map captured by the photographer Matej Povse *2015, November 12, Greece, Lesvos. Group of refugees from Afghanistan are looking on the map of Europe drawn in the registration camp Moria on island Lesvos, Greece* part of the collection 'New Europeans - Welcome to Europe' (fig. 1). In the picture, we see a map drawn on a tent in the Moria refugee camp, while it is looked at and pointed on by some migrants on the camp to trace the route to Europe. As reported by Lo Presti,[6] who interviewed Povse, the map is drawn on a tent built from plastic tarpaulin intended as unofficial info centre. People from Afghanistan are pointing at Germany and Scandinavia, as at the time the Balkan route was 'open'.[7] This particular drawing brings out two different functions of what I call *carto-graffiti* in the Black Mediterranean route, that exceed the functions played by other forms of graffiti.

Firstly, the carto-graffiti have the function of reconstructing roots. This means the function of leaving traces, individual and collective. Individual, because graffiti are always a way to imprint life, existence, a self-determination: 'I exist', 'I was here', as a footprint in a world that imprisons those it considers marginal, be it the material prison or the one of invisibility. Collective,because through the map this specific carto-graffiti tracks down historical marks in order to let theviolence of the migration journey emerge. In this sense, 'Graffiti reflect a practice of place-making in non-places also for migrants and refugees who leave historical marks in the barren transit spaces of borderlands or transform walls into spaces for public debate and resistance against encampment policies.[8]

Secondly, these alternative carto-graffiti represent visual examples of a shared knowledge.

> Among the few spaces left which can help cultivate the dream of successful movement and resettlement in the daily routines of displaced people. Often appropriated and subsequently personalized, annotated, caressed, touched, and shared, maps may elicit different emotions, aspirations, and expectations that bring the hoped-for, but constantly deferred, possibility of eventual safety into the life of the camp.[9]

In the form of carto-graffiti left in the route of the Black Mediterranean, these alternative and creative counter-cartographies become practices and collective tactics to build a collective

[5] Ibid., p. 182.
[6] LO PRESTI 2020.
[7] Ibid.
[8] MOZE, SPIEGEL 2022, p. 7.
[9] LO PRESTI 2020.

path: they are left to build a shared knowledge for those whowill follow the same journey. In this way, they become imprints that can co-construct a co-habitat:each migrating person participates in this polyphonic narrative, in which they construct a space for themselves, shared with arrows, memories, messages of hope and possibilities.

As graphic traces that compose counter-narrations, the carto-graffiti help us to have access to stories of migration, normally silenced and removed by the mainstream where migrants are reducedinto mere numbers through a process of dehumanization. At the same time, as they compose 'a *chorus* of silent voices with different levels of meaning and a high degree complexity',[10] they act as tactics for a shared knowledge, (re)writing and (re)imagining traces, roots, routes.

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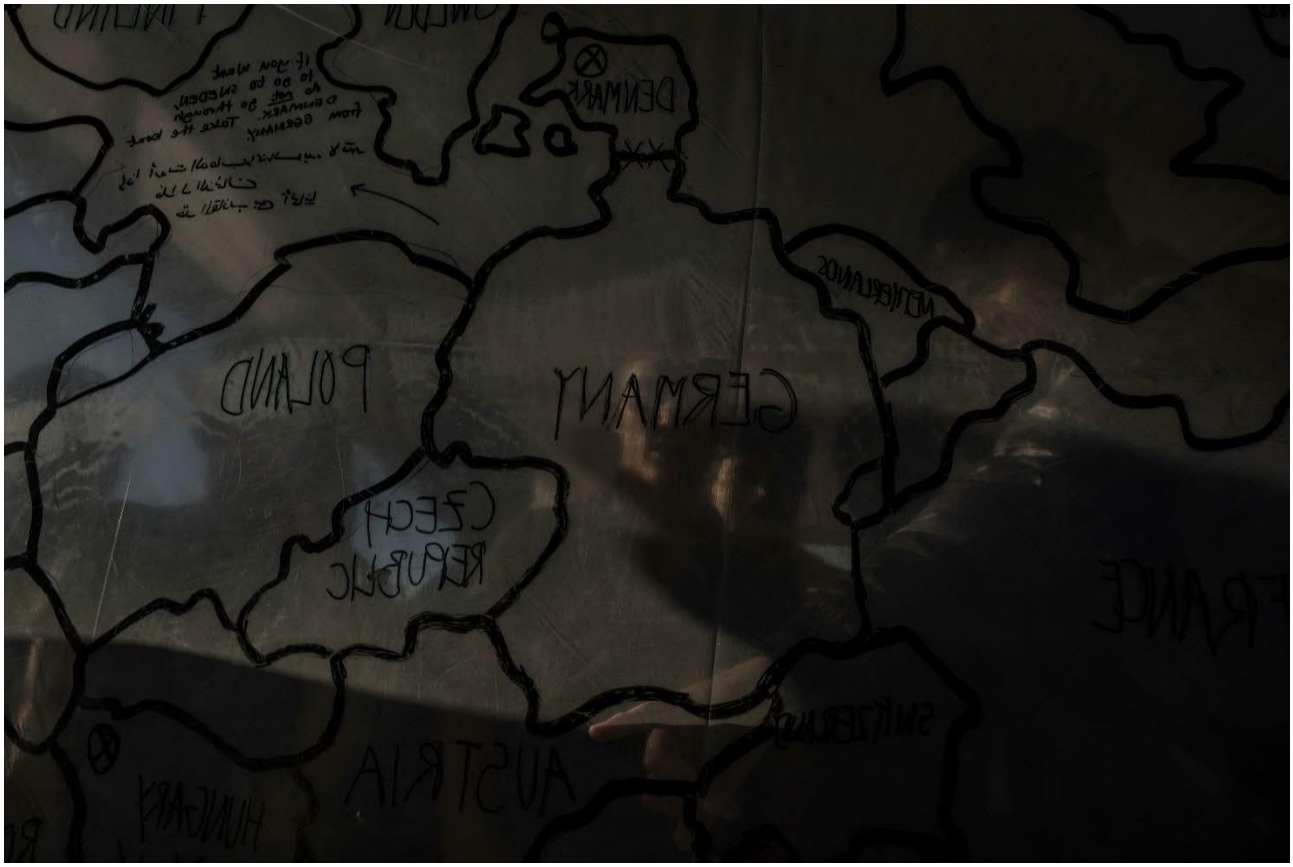

Fig. 1 *2015, November 12, Greece, Lesvos. Group of refugees from Afghanistan are looking on the map of Europe drawn in the registration camp Moria on island Lesvos, Greece*, Collection 'New Europeans - Welcome to Europe'. Photo: Matej Povse, Courtesy of Matej Povse

Street art was here[1]: On the Ephemeral Nature of Graffiti in Contemporary Cities

Daniele Roccaro, Mirco Vannoni

Getting Started: Graffiti/Street Art

Constantly changing, cities are never the same. Incubators of major transformations and identity claims, urban spaces are the milieu in which spontaneous social practices such as hip-hop and graffiti can emerge.[2] The latter, thanks to its ephemerality, becomes a creative manifestation of the continuous changes to which urban space is subject.[3] They are not merely a decoration of urban surfaces but activate relational processes. Indeed, contemporary graffiti can be considered a form of urban identity politics: they create intense and regenerating aesthetic experiences that tell the story of urban life.[4]

Born as a spontaneous phenomenon in the 1970s in neo-capitalist cities,[5] graffiti is characterized by being considered, from its inception, as a practice that operates outside the boundaries of the law and societal norms.[6] A form of social conflict arising from the dialectic that involves on the one hand the power of law enforcement and repression; and on the other hand, urban guerrilla initiatives responding to censorship.[7]

Through different forms of writing and sketches, people can redefine their identity and make themselves heard in the urban context. In fact, the symbolization of space as a social fact –

[1] With 'Street art was here' - which also gives this contribution its title - we refer to the inscription 'Kilroy was here' which, during the last years of the Second World War, appeared on the walls of destroyed European cities. Functioning as a caption to a drawing of a small man, the writing 'Kilroy was here' seems to have originated with the American soldiers engaged in the liberation of Europe from Nazi-fascist occupation. An emblematic and at the same time ironic sign of their presence that let those who came across this drawing know that the place had been liberated.

[2] See FERRELL 1993; LACHMAN 1988; PRIGOFF 1987.

[3] On the role of graffiti as a collective social practice see ADAY 1990; BRYANT 1982; CASTLEMAN 1982.

[4] It is a terminology we take from COSTA, LOPEZ 2015. Cities, their design, the ways in which streets are traversed, and the various social practices that take place in it are all semiotic phenomena. *Space*, as Marrone points out, speaks to us of 'other than itself, it speaks of us who have thought of it, designed it, built it or experienced it, surrendering ideas and ideologies to it deviously', translated by the authors from MARRONE 2013, p. 14.

[5] Barthes recalls how 'the wall, as we know, invokes writing: there is no wall, in the city, without graffiti. It is somehow the medium itself that holds a writing energy', in BARTHES 1994, vol. 2, p. 64. However, it is important to emphasize that there is a profound difference between historical and contemporary graffiti. In fact, the context in which the latter take shape – the city – terminates their specific semiotic functions and their conditions of existence (see LOTMAN 1985; FABBRI 2010), which take on their own particularity.

[6] HARVEY 2012.

[7] On this AMATO 2010 and BUTLER 2015, focus their attention on the political appropriateness of the collective performativity of bodies in neo-capitalist cities.

as Jean Baudrillard recalls – is 'a new type of intervention in the city, no longer as a site of economic and political power, but as a space-time of the terrorist power of the media, signs and the dominant cultures'.[8] According to this reading, the different forms of graffiti change the image of the city and re-semantize the urban space like a tattoo artist's gesture on untouched and pure skin: 'graffiti turn the city's walls and corners, the subway's cars and the buses, into a body, a body without beginning or end, made erotogenic in its entirety by writing just as the body may be in the primitive inscription'.[9]

Over time, the framing of this social practice has undergone different and controversial developments, progressively becoming recognized as street art. Although forms of occupation and claiming of public space through graffiti still exist, we are now witnessing different processes of institutionalization of these forms of expression.[10] Examples of this are commissioned public artwork by municipal governments or their appearance in exhibitions, museums, and auction houses due to the growing interest of the global art world.[11] Artists, critics, and viewers must grapple with a difficult question: what remains of the rebellious origin of graffiti? Is that spontaneous form of street art with a message of freedom of expression a dead phenomenon? Is it maybe time to talk about this in the past tense and accept that *street art was here*, in our cities, in our lives, and now its message has died out, or does it still exist and resist?

From Art to Dust

Starting with the clash that can be traced between graffiti as a spontaneous expressive practice and their recognition as works of art, two temporary exhibitions, one in Paris (*Tour Paris 13*) and one in Berlin (*TheHaus*) are the opportunity to reflect on the *reconciliation* of these dynamics in the context of street art in the contemporary landscape. The reason for this is that, although they are the outcome of mediations between commissions from the art world and municipal institutions, they maintain and, in the programmatic nature of such operations, they display one of the foundational components of graffiti: its ephemerality. Indeed, this trait is important because it makes assimilation into the capitalist system, of which art and museum institutions are also part, impossible.

[8] Translated by the authors from BAUDRILLARD 1976, p. 80.
[9] Ibid., p. 82.
[10] ALINOVI 1984; BIANCHI, VITI 2017, pp. 1-6.
[11] On the question of the institutionalization of artistic practices in the global context see, among others, BUTLER 2010, POTTS 2010.

Tour Paris 13 is an initiative conceived by Galerie Itinerrance at the beginning of 2013 in collaboration with the municipality of the thirteenth arrondissement of Paris. An operation realized in a social housing building destined for destruction and therefore not designed for contemporary art space. A collective exhibition organized in a large space of over 4.500 square meters, structured on nine floors plus a basement, which involved over one hundred artists who for six months took graffiti both inside and outside the building (fig. 1). The process of occupying and writing in the building was then followed by a month of opening to the public, from 1st to 31st October 2013, which tended to coincide with the planned demolition date of the building. The structural programmatic nature of this type of initiative meant that the *Tour Paris 13* exhibition took the form of a real manifesto of street art, drawing the public's attention to one of the typical characteristics of graffiti: its fragile and temporary condition of existence in public space. An operation that stands in open contrast to practices of museification, exhibition in art galleries, or commodification and sale in auction houses.[12]

Another interesting case study is *TheHaus, Berlin Art Bang*. The project was created by Dixons / Xi-Design, a team of Berlin-based artists. The exhibition was set up in an old bank building directly on Berlin's Kurfürstendamm, one of the richest areas in the German capital. The building bore five floors, 10.000 square meters, 108 surfaces and this is why the operation was full of symbolic meanings. Once the demolition of the building was announced, it was 'invaded' by a group of street artists of different nationalities who undertook to modify the spaces from the inside – 165 artists worked in the building: Base23, El Bocho, Herakut or the 1UP 'One United Power' crew,[13] just to name a few. Together with the SBB Crew,[14] they worked on the project for several weeks experimenting with many innovations, combining graffiti with installations and sculptures, and transforming the offices of the former bank, a symbol of the capitalist system, into an ephemeral museum full of street art (fig. 2). It was a temporary exhibition open for only two months,[15] during this short period, it hosted more than 70.000 visitors, after which the entire building, including the art, was demolished to make way for a new residential building.

[12] See HEINICH, SCHAPIRO 2012.
[13] The 1UP 'One United Power' crew is most famous for their worldwide graffiti actions. Street-bombings in broad daylight, whole cars in running traffic, rooftops at dizzying heights.
[14] The SBB Crew is a group, which includes about twenty graffiti artists. Their graffiti and tags are scattered throughout Germany.
[15] It was inaugurated in Berlin on 1 April 2017 and remained open daily until 31 May 2017.

Ephemeral Conclusions

Tour Paris 13 and *TheHaus*, the destruction of these buildings, draw attention to the practice of occupying urban spaces, and how individuals experience city spaces through practices such as writing in the city. Invisibility, the result of the destruction, is thus not a process of erasure as such but rather a strategy of signification and inscription in everyone's memory of this shared experience. The exhibitions in Paris and Berlin, in the twofold process of collective art practice inside the buildings and their subsequent programmed destruction, become a sign and denunciation of the processes of musealization of a social practice that did not originally envisage forms of spectacularization. A complex operation that can be read as a form of criticism of contemporary practices in the art world. Indeed, the two curatorial projects bring attention to the impermanence of street art, to the dimension of the ephemeral rather than its preservation and display in galleries and museums. By bringing attention back to the social and collective practice of graffiti art, *Tour Paris 13* and *TheHaus* make themselves the manifesto of street art for two reasons. The first is because they emphasize the power of urban writings as a practice of 'symbolizing the space'[16] that people, as citizens, pass through daily. The second is that the act of demolition can be considered a true *memento mori* for street art, opening up a space for reflection on the logic and processes of musealization that distinguish street art in the contemporary art scene.

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Fig. 1 *Tour Paris 13* from the outside, 13th arrondissement, Paris, 2013. © Google Arts & Culture

Fig. 2 Artwork made by Disturbanity Graphics, Matthias Gephart's illustration lab. in *TheHaus, Berlin Art Bang*, Berlin, 2017. © The Haus

5 Artistic Projects in Prison

The Art of Resistance: Experience and Creative Process in and out of Prison

Laura Barreca

'My cell receives a light halfway between the light of a cellar and the light of an aquarium'.[1] So wrote Antonio Gramsci on 27 February 1928 in a letter to his wife Giulia. Writing of his efforts to resist the ferocious conditions of his imprisonment, he nonetheless described a 'rapid and total agitation',[2] a kind of vital charge. Moved to defy the monotony of the passing time and the brutality of his environment, he set down a profound epistolary and political testament. References to a state of sensory, affective, cultural, material and above all human deprivation are typical of incarceration; yet it seems natural that, for one of the most fertile minds of any era, creativity should have been an instrument of moral resistance. Resistance no longer conveyed through a body now physically oppressed but through words: signs conceived and inscribed, intimately charted and relayed onto paper or walls. Thus, for all that the magistrate Michele Isgrò concluded his condemnatory tirade against Gramsci with the infamous phrase 'For the next twenty years we must keep this mind from thinking', Gramsci's letters to his family remain a testament to his intellectual vigour. Nearly a century later, one cannot indeed think of the *Notebooks* solely in terms of opposition to the unjust sentence pronounced by the fascist government, which ultimately condemned Gramsci to a premature end, but equally as an affirmation of language as expression of a total and absolute liberty of the person. In 2004, attesting to the continued significance of Gramsci's example, the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar created the installation *Infinite Cell* (fig. 1), comprising a 1:1 replica of Gramsci's prison cell, its walls clad in mirrors that project limitlessly outward. The public is confronted with the compromised physicality of a miniscule space, which yet reverberates into visual infinity: an echo of the boundless freedom sought by Antonio Gramsci.[3]

I Asked for Pen and Paper

The liberating power of the written word resonates with particular force on the part of 'political' prisoners, whose imprisonment serves the strategic purpose of their individual

[1] GRAMSCI 2014, p. 78.
[2] Ibid.
[3] JAAR 2006.

suppression. In such circumstances, the simple lack of pencil and paper clearly constitutes the most odious of punishments. While a state of confinement surely entails a general physical deterioration, such as a progressive weakening of eyesight through persistent immobility and lack of perspective cues, the need for self-expression can manifest itself in indirect forms.[4] Symbols or words carved into cell walls form a palimpsest of sentimental legacies, expressions of suffering, loneliness, anguish, hope, rage or faith. These walls are places of personal expression and semantic re-appropriation: artefacts of crossings, most often accomplished with very limited means.[5] History has often left only fragile, insubstantial traces of these singular and 'involuntary' iconographic repositories, owing to the very nature of their medium and the environments in which they are found. Yet in some cases they possess great historical, social and anthropological value.[6] An illustrated inventory of human experience that transforms silent grey environments into pages of vivid autobiography, decipherable in turn by other inmates; such a space becomes, in semiotic terms, a 'text-manifesto'.[7] It is a history that repeats, as apparent in words of the Palestinian poet and activist Dareen Tatour, imprisoned 'because of a poem' invoking her people's resistance that circulated on social networks (figs. 2-3). Her unjust detention moved her not only to outrage but also to an intrigued interest in the lives transcribed on the walls of her cell, on which she too left the mark of her 'prison poetry' so that others could read and understand the anguish of her indefensible punishment and her licit claim to individual freedom.

> Lots of things written on the wall intrigued me, and I started to read and examine them: various phrases in Arabic, Hebrew and English; the names of people who had passed through here; a picture of a heart; a love arrow with initials; prayers and insults. I would read them – sometimes laughing, sometimes lamenting – and would empathise with whoever had written the phrase. I wished that I had my camera with me to photograph this rare painting, and felt an even stronger need for a pen, and for writing itself. I asked for pen and paper, but the prison guard refused to give me anything. I tried to understand the reason, her plea that it was prohibited by law here.[8]

Independent Thought Alarm!

Consider the example of Alaa Abd el-Fattah, activist and icon of the dissidence of Egypt's 2011 popular uprising: Abd el-Fattah is a political prisoner currently serving time for crimes of opinion. In prison he is denied books, paper, sunlight and exercise. He has not given in, even

[4] BOCCALI 2022.
[5] LOVATA, OLTON 2015.
[6] FALETRA 2015.
[7] According to semiotic theory, a sign's meaning is not limited to the sign itself nor to its appearance; it continues to generate meaning by the mere fact of having been conceived, configured and reutilized.
[8] TATOUR 2022, p. 249.

writing on toilet paper, which he has successfully smuggled out of prison with the aid of a network of supporters. One day as he descended the corridor that led him before a judge, his fellow activist Mona Seif urged him on with the phrase 'Think, Alaa, think!'.[9] His thoughts, therefore, are the most perilous threat that he poses; yet despite his exhaustion and the bitter conditions of his imprisonment, Abd el-Fattah continues his battle. Does he feel that 'rapid and total agitation' of which Gramsci spoke? As a political prisoner, Abd el-Fattah today defends his right to speak, standing for a non-negotiable freedom. Social control, surveillance and duly censorship are the instruments through which governments have historically exercised power over things and people, pursuing the precise goal of determining people's choices and, in some cases, inhibiting independent thought. Today it is artificial intelligence, with all its benefits, that represents the chief instrument of social control, forming the basis of the 'surveillance capitalism' postulated by the American scholar Shoshana Zuboff: a new power dynamic founded upon the manipulation of individual behaviour through machines and social communication[10] (fig. 4).

History abounds in political prisoners, from Giordano Bruno – executed in Rome in 1600 by the Tribunal of the Inquisition for crimes of opinion and for theological and scientific ideas incompatible with Catholic doctrine – to Tommaso Campanella, writer, poet and philosopher, declared a heretic by the Roman Holy Office. Campanella was held in the prison system from the turn of the sixteenth century to the end of its first quarter: almost half his life.[11] Censorial persecution was one of the tactics that the Inquisition deployed most ruthlessly, by which it crushed 'independent thought' and choked the voices of intellectuals. Exercising absolute Europe-wide power through the *longa manus* of the religious orders, the Holy Office was 'poised to depart to wherever suspicion of heresy arose'.[12] Every redaction – every form of curtailment of written or figurative thought – constitutes just such an attempt to stem the diffusion of critical or politically suspect opinion, to blunt its potentially subversive power. The censorial (or iconoclastic) act, according to recent studies by David Freedberg, is in fact generated by a paradoxically simultaneous fear and love of art, which are 'two sides of the

[9] Alaa Abd el-Fattah's story, and that of the entire politically repressive context in which he became prominent, is recounted in the 2021 book *You Have Not Yet Been Defeated*, courtesy of a collective composed of family members and journalist-activists, who have reconstructed his political and private life through a collection of posts, tweets, and other documents penned by Abd el-Fattah from the 2011 Tahrir Square uprising onwards (ABD EL-FATTAH 2021).
[10] ZUBOFF 2019.
[11] GUZZO, AMERIO 1956.
[12] LA MOTTA 2019, p. 9.

same coin'.[13] Censorship is essentially the fruit of a set of psychological factors shackled equally to historical context and social setting.[14] By the same token, figurative allusion constitutes an epiphenomenon of acutely repressive political orientations. What relationship, then, binds censorship and imagination? How do poets, artists, writers, intellectuals and freethinkers face the deprivations of the prison experience?

The Art of Being Free: Experiences of Contemporary Creativity

In recent decades, due in part to civil society's growing concern with prison conditions – no longer a 'separate reality' but a human context in which the dignity of the individual is at stake – the need has become apparent for a different approach. This has led to 'a profound change in the very concept of the correctional institution'.[15] This evolution has been the basis of many intriguing cultural initiatives, which have approached the prison question from different points of view, whether political, sociological or anthropological. They have also often contested and denounced coercive prison systems. Among the most recent such projects, Indian artist Shilpa Gupta's work *For, in Your Tongue, I Cannot Fit* is an both an installation and a compilation of one hundred texts penned by writers, poets and free thinkers imprisoned, persecuted and censored over different periods; figures largely detained for political reasons.[16] Exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2019, the work counts among recent years' most lucid accounts of the strategies of intellectual resistance, as expressed through the language of art. Viewers are invited to move through a visual and aural space in which spiked metal bars impale sheets of paper printed with the imprisoned poets' verses. Microphones obsessively recite the same fragments of verse. The work's cumulative effect is a powerfully emotional public engagement, an affirmation and defence of the fragile right to expression.

In 2020, the group exhibition 'Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration', along with the book of the same name edited by Nicole R. Fleetwood,[17] documented a decade of research, analysis and cataloguing of imprisoned American artists' visual art and creative practices.

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[13] FREEDBERG 2016.
[14] CARAVALE 2022.
[15] NOTARFRANCESCO Domenica, ed., 'L'edilizia penitenziaria tra *vecchi* e *nuovi* spazi della pena', in *La dignità della persona in carcere* (Dispense ISSP), 4 (2013), <https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_12_1.page?contentId=SPS959271>, accessed 24 June 2023.
[16] GUPTA, TRIPATHI 2022.
[17] Nicole R. Fleetwood is a professor of American Studies and Art History at Rutgers University in New Jersey; her book *Marking Time*, an account of the lives and creative visions of inmates obscured by the American prison system, has won prestigious international awards (FLEETWOOD 2020).

Despite the criminal justice system's widespread conditions of deprivation, isolation and degradation, prisoners strive to assert their humanity in the face of the brutalising power exercised over them. Both exhibition and publication are based on interviews with artists then or previously incarcerated, on prison visits and the author's personal history with the American penal system. *Marking Time* provides an extraordinary glimpse of creativity in prison, of the way that inmates – though subject to utter deprivation and the harshest of conditions – succeed in transforming everyday objects into often politically-loaded artworks, many of which protest the American prison system. This body of works bears general witness to the economic and racial inequities underpinning the principles of punitive justice, offering a new vision of the concept of freedom in the twenty-first century.

The GAP project's initiatives have included an evocative gospel-rap concert featuring Naomi Wilson and BL Shirelle,[18] artist and co-founder of the non-profit Die Jim Crow Records, the first record label in American history dedicated to artists in prison or in the process of social reintegration. The stories of these two Afro-American vocalists, both of whom have built a new existence through music – including their joint project in collaboration with Yale's Institute of Sacred Music – prove the potential of creativity once again, not least its positive impact in correctional education, where it speaks for the vital cause of human solidarity.

GAP: Graffiti Art in Prison, Palermo

The GAP project has gathered four female artists and three Palermo correctional institutions: Pagliarelli Prison, Ucciardone Men's Prison and Malaspina Juvenile Detention Centre. Different vernaculars and creative approaches were adopted for each institution, depending on both the prison context in question and the inmates involved. The project's impact was not to be evaluated in terms of its products, but on the nature of the connections forged between inmates and doctoral students, between educators and cultural mediators, between university and prison: contexts only apparently distant. Stepping outside of established convention, these players have found ample common ground through contemporary art. By merit of a dialogic approach and the building of horizontal relationships, all the project's participants have contributed to its actions; themselves conceived in favour of collectivity and a spirit of co-ownership. If the concept of 'interdependence' proposed in the *Care Manifesto* is valid – that is, that we all depend on each other and that only by nurturing these

[18] BL Shirelle, <http://www.blshirelle.com/>, accessed 24 June 2023.

interdependencies can we contribute to a better worldly existence – then it is necessary to reimagine the role of care in our daily lives.[19] Thus we create the conditions for ethical collective growth, contributing significantly to communities' social and cultural development. This pact of cooperation concretely enshrines the university's active role as a socialisation agency at the service not only of the university population but of society as a whole.

Matilde Cassani's workshop at Ucciardone Prison took place mainly in the prison yard, the only area where prisoners are freely permitted to move, run, walk or play; their only liberty in a space larger than the cells, corridors or cramped spaces of their confinement, one of the most obvious problems with which is the lack of any extended field of vision. Theirs are airless spaces, high external walls and monotonous colours. All ultimately cause a weakening of eyesight and related problems. With the prison director's support, the artist thus proposed a collective action to bathe the 'grey courtyard' in colour. In a genuine act of reappropriation, participants painted the crests of football teams, emblems and other symbols on the yard's surrounding wall. At the same time, their collective efforts transformed the yard itself into a football field of soft desert colours.

Artist **Elisa Giardina Papa**, aided by Giovanna Fiume, conducted a series of workshops with eight young residents of the Malaspina Juvenile Detention Centre. The project stems from the artist's ongoing practice; she has devoted years to studying the lives of heretic women, an interest intrinsically linked to the graffiti of the Steri Prisons. The same research forms the basis of her video work *U Scantu: A Disorderly Tale*, exhibited at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022. During their sessions, the artist guided the teenagers in printmaking techniques, which they used to design t-shirts and other garments. These were printed with text drawn from the Steri prisons combined with messages devised by the teenagers themselves in collaboration with the participating group of doctoral students. The workshops' various creations included a t-shirt stamped front and back with the words 'innocent or guilty', conveying the deep inner turmoil of one young participant: a conflicted state that has, however, found expression through creativity and the language of art.[20]

At Pagliarelli prison, **Stefania Galegati** coordinated the project *Pagliarelli University: La scuola dei saperi* (The School of Competencies), which united a group of twelve female

[19] THE CARE COLLECTIVE 2020.

[20] To decorate their streetwear, the participants drew on an iconographic archive composed of writings and drawings from the Steri's repository of graffiti; these had been chosen by Elisa Giardina Papa and Giovanna Fiume.

inmates and doctoral students. This collective project revolved upon an exchange of roles and the weaving of horizontal relationships in which each participant, whatever her personal role, took responsibility for sharing a competency. Making tortellini, drawing space, learning dance steps; each was a pretext for a method that disrupts hierarchies and transforms spaces of confinement into sites of resonant individual subjectivity and unleashed imagination.

The two prisons of Pagliarelli and Ucciardone have been photographed by **Giovanna Silva**, who specializes in architectural photography but has an innate anthropological interest in capturing sites that bear the anthropic stamp of habitation. Corners of ordinary environments, everyday objects, residues of domestic life in places by nature inhospitable: all tell of life 'inside'. They detail the dehumanized banality of all things in that world apart, where all is at once useful and useless in proportion to the value attributed to it. The images reveal the depersonalized, standardized lives of these drab and uniform environments, calibrated to unvarying primary needs: a place that yet resounds with those 'soundless screams' described by Giuseppe Pitrè more than a century ago.

The GAP project has also enlisted the writer **Giorgio Vasta**, who has tailored a work to the prisons. The Steri's inventive iconographic repertoire boasts a notable peculiarity: its graffiti and drawings were executed with brick dust scraped from the floor, the lampblack of candles and naturally-occurring pigments, all mixed with the bodily fluids of the inscriptions' prisoner-authors. Those individuals' DNA is embedded in the surface of the Steri's walls, a unique signature that conveys yet more clearly the Palermo site's dual nature as both monument and document: a text-manifesto testifying to a spirit of physical and intellectual endurance. Giorgio Vasta has told the story of these 'bodies in the wall' via a sound walk through the cells, summoning and revitalising their three-hundred-year-old memories of imprisonment.

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Fig. 1 Alfredo Jaar, *Infinite Cell*, Enviromental installation, MAXXI, Rome, 2004
Photo: Courtesy of Fondazione MAXXI

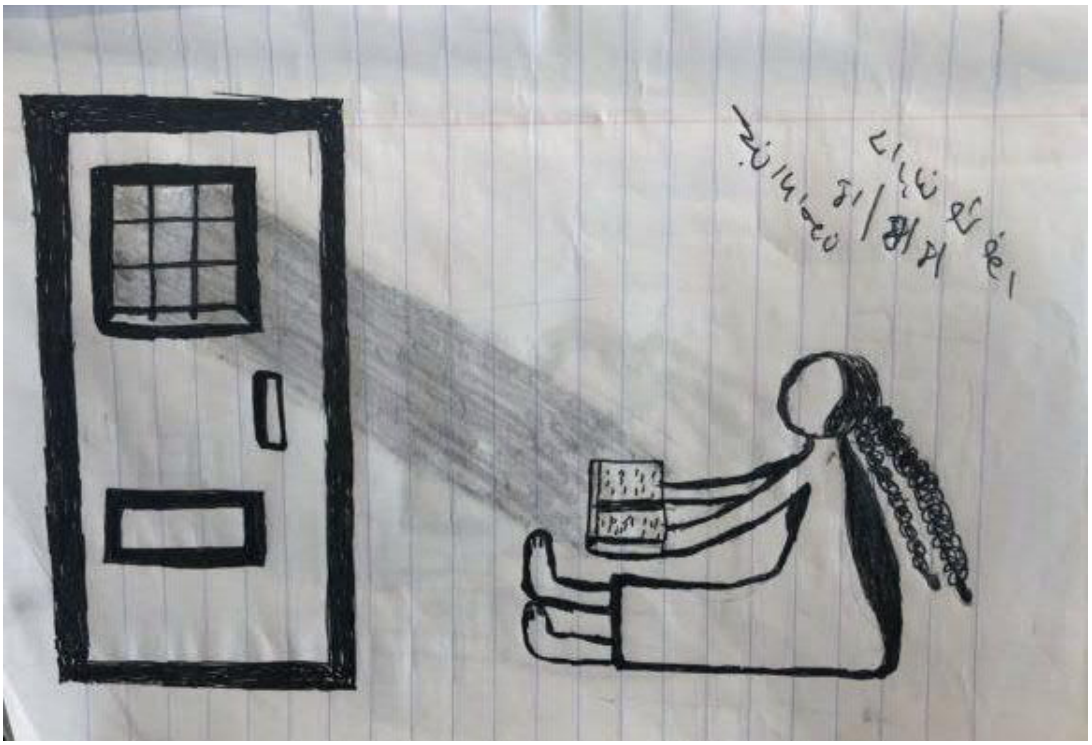


Fig. 2 Dareen Tatour, *A bright spot*, pen drawing on paper, Ramon Prison, 18 August 2018.
Source: https://www.invictapalestina.org/archives/35398

Fig. 3 *Free Dareen Tatour,* campaign poster, 2016.
Source: https://samidoun.net/2018/05/dareen-tatour-convicted-for-poetry-take-action-to-demand-justice-and-freedom-for-palestine/

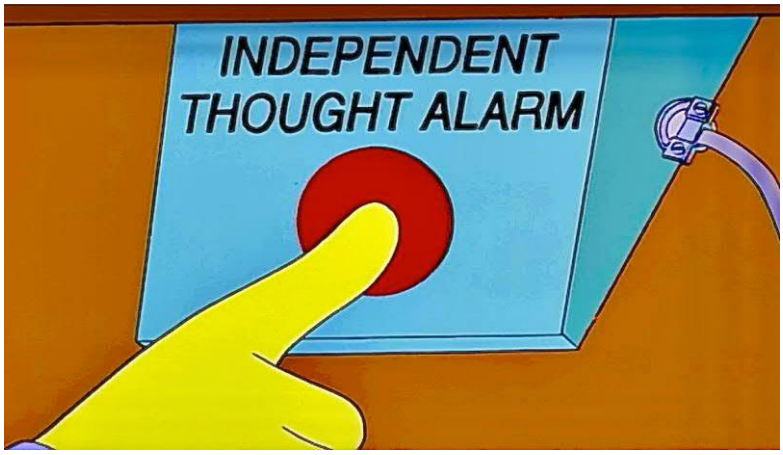


Fig. 4 *Alarm Independent Thought*, still image from *The Simpsons*, se. 7 – ep. 5 ('Lisa the Vegetarian')

Operation Grigi Cortili, 2022

A project by Matilde Cassani at 'Ucciardone' Prison, Palermo

This project was proposed as a collaboration between GAP Project doctoral students and inmates of the Calogero di Bona (Ucciardone) Prison, a collaboration that would look at the prison's common areas as sites for generating new ideas. I proposed a participatory project that would provisionally modify the space: new furnishings and new horizontal surfaces would be introduced (creating a new 'floor'), along with a new rest area and a message written on the ground, visible only from above. In addition to modifying the open space in which inmates spend their daily lives, the project would also be visible from Google Maps, thus transforming our work into a communication with the outside world, no sooner than the appropriate satellite images were updated. Our collaboration focused on the so-called *grigi cortili*, the 'grey courtyards' of the prison's open spaces.

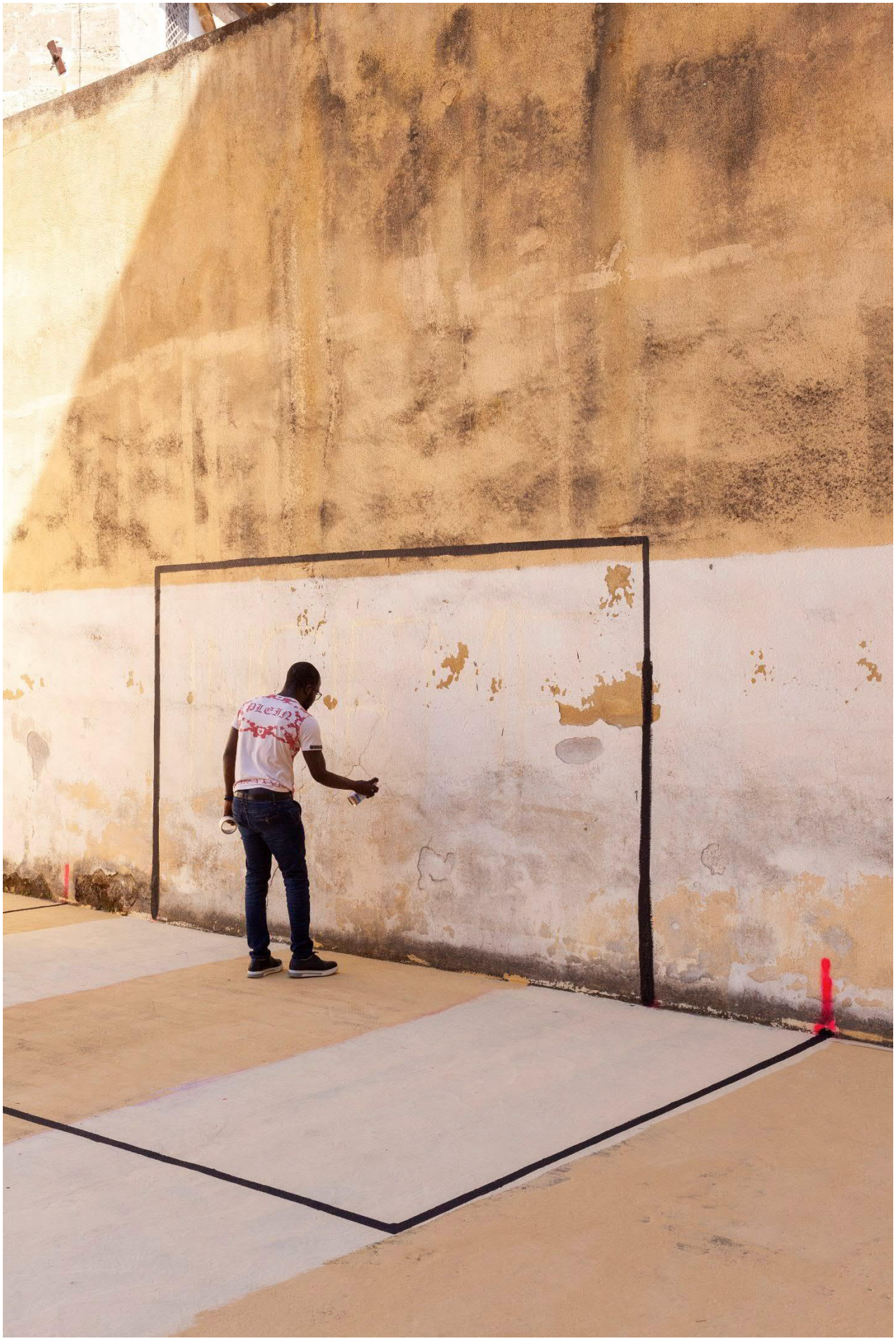
The Ucciardone prison is a panopticon, an architectural model that I had never seen before but of which I had learned during a History of Architecture course that comprised Jeremy Bentham and his 1791 outline of an ideal prison. Being a panopticon, the Ucciardone is monitored from its centre, within a series of wings dedicated to the different cell blocks. Empty segments occupy the spaces between wings: the courtyards. Arrayed rhythmically between one building and the next, identical in size and surface finish, they follow one another around the prisoners' cells.

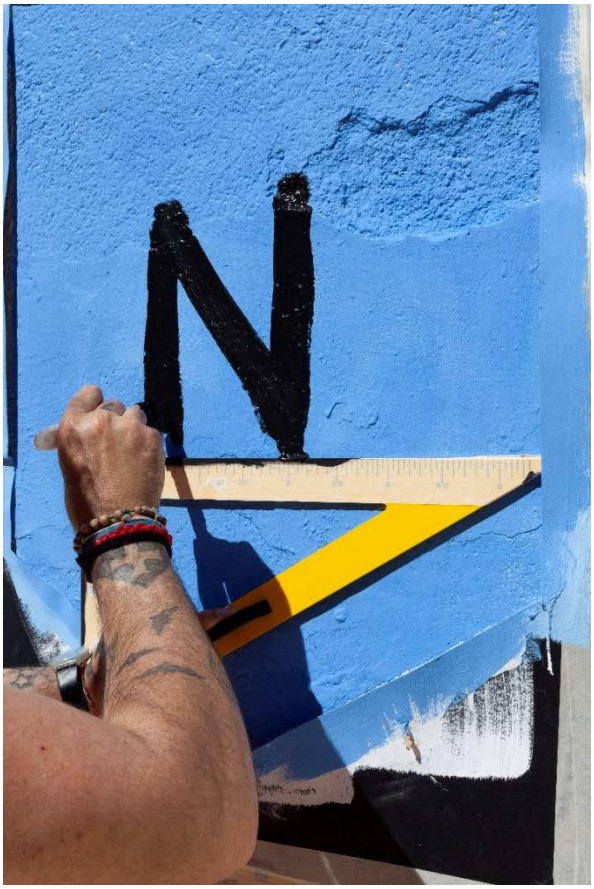
Here these empty segments are known as grey courtyards. Our project of the same name focused on one of them. We were allotted the grey courtyard that plays host to the free time of the most isolated prisoners of all, the sex offenders. In keeping with their class of offence, these inmates are not permitted to share their cells with others. Within the prison's spaces, therefore, they are isolated even in their isolation, not coming into contact with anyone. The grey courtyard is the same for everyone, however. It is a cement space of floors and walls with a single football goal, its line markings now dissolved. A small fraction is shaded. I had planned my intervention without the slightest experience of a prison, so that I had no idea of how to behave or of what would be expected of me. The project as proposed therefore proved worlds apart from the project ultimately realized. My initial idea was to coat the yard in coloured paint and to then distribute phosphorescent spray cans among the inmates. Inspired by the Steri prison's

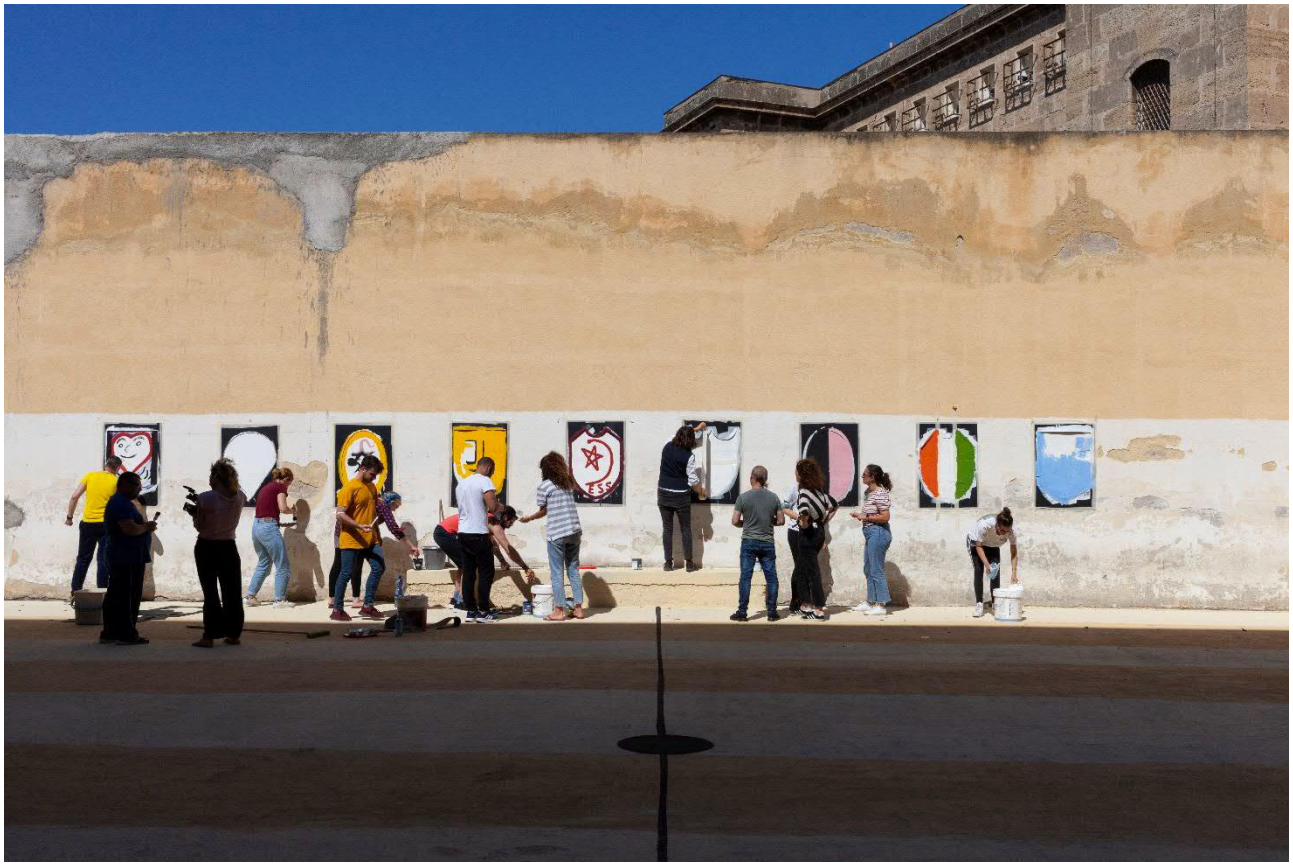
graffiti, I wanted them to leave a secret message – secret during the day, at least; only visible at night, and therefore visible to no one.

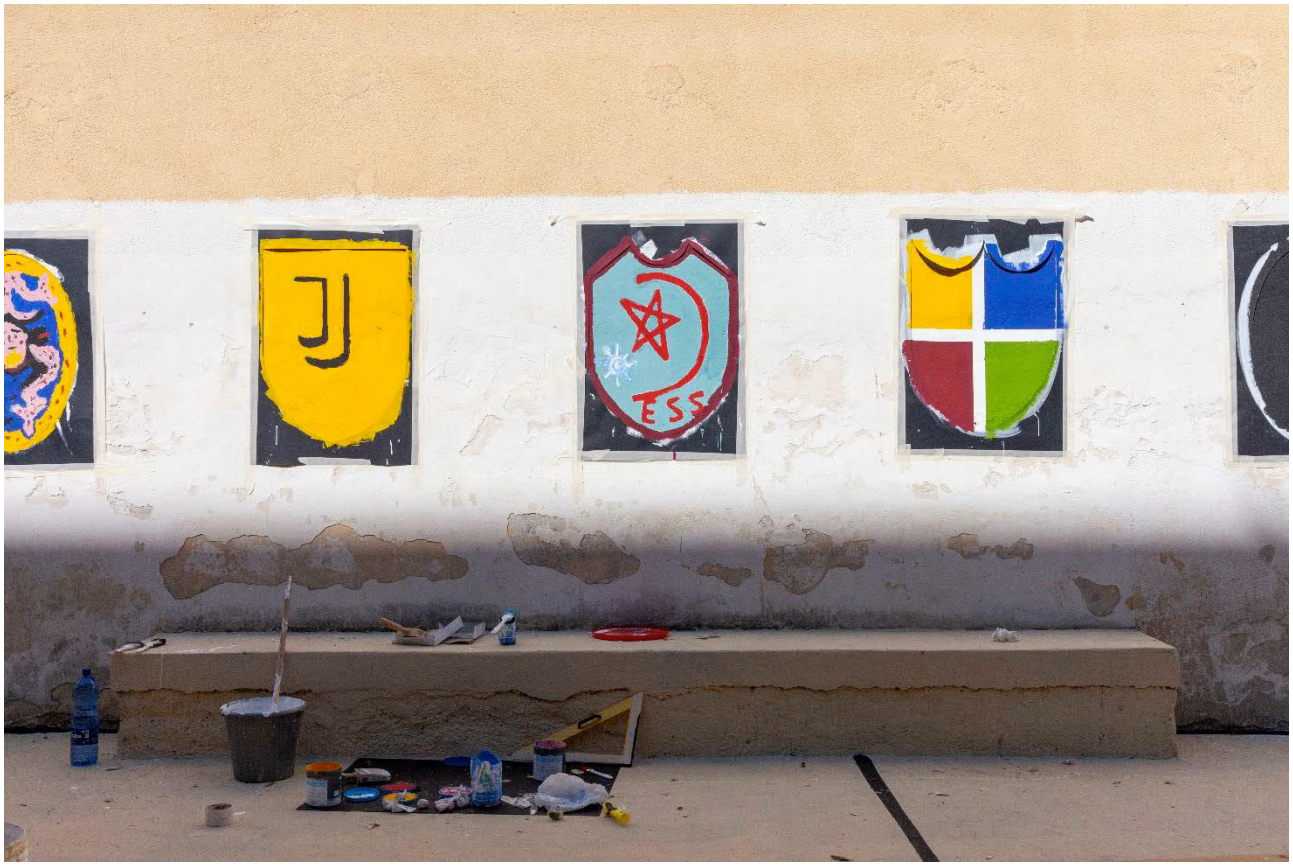
Entry into the prison is slow. When the doors open, a series of lush gardens appears within, a bar, other low buildings. The most heavily guarded sections are accessible through imposing gates that lead on to less accessible spaces. Once we had passed through this sequence of spaces into our courtyard, the project immediately changed. The need became clear at that point: not to provide the inmates with secret forms of expression but to regenerate their space. We immediately set about remaking what was already there, giving contour to the activities that already unfolded in the courtyard. Football was the principal activity, but on a field that had lost its boundary lines and field markings. We refinished its surface, redrew the midfield lines and the goals, then heightened their colours. Using large stencils in the shape of shields, everyone drew their team's flag, whichever it was, real or fictitious. The event's outcome was less clearly evident in the spatial result than in the inmates' response; two moments were truly stirring. The first was the rediscovery of colour: in prison, inmates lose their awareness of living colours. Inside, nothing is coloured. The sight of those swathes of colour dazzled the participants. The second was the feeling of having constructed a moment of community. At one point everyone shouted from the upper floors, through their cell bars: 'Do Naaaples!!!', 'Do Milan!!!', 'Nooo, that's not how Palermo looks'.

* Matilde Cassani, *Operazione grigi cortili*, 2022, painting and plastering on the floor and walls of the prison yard, workshop at the Casa di Reclusione 'Calogero Di Bona', Ucciardone, Palermo





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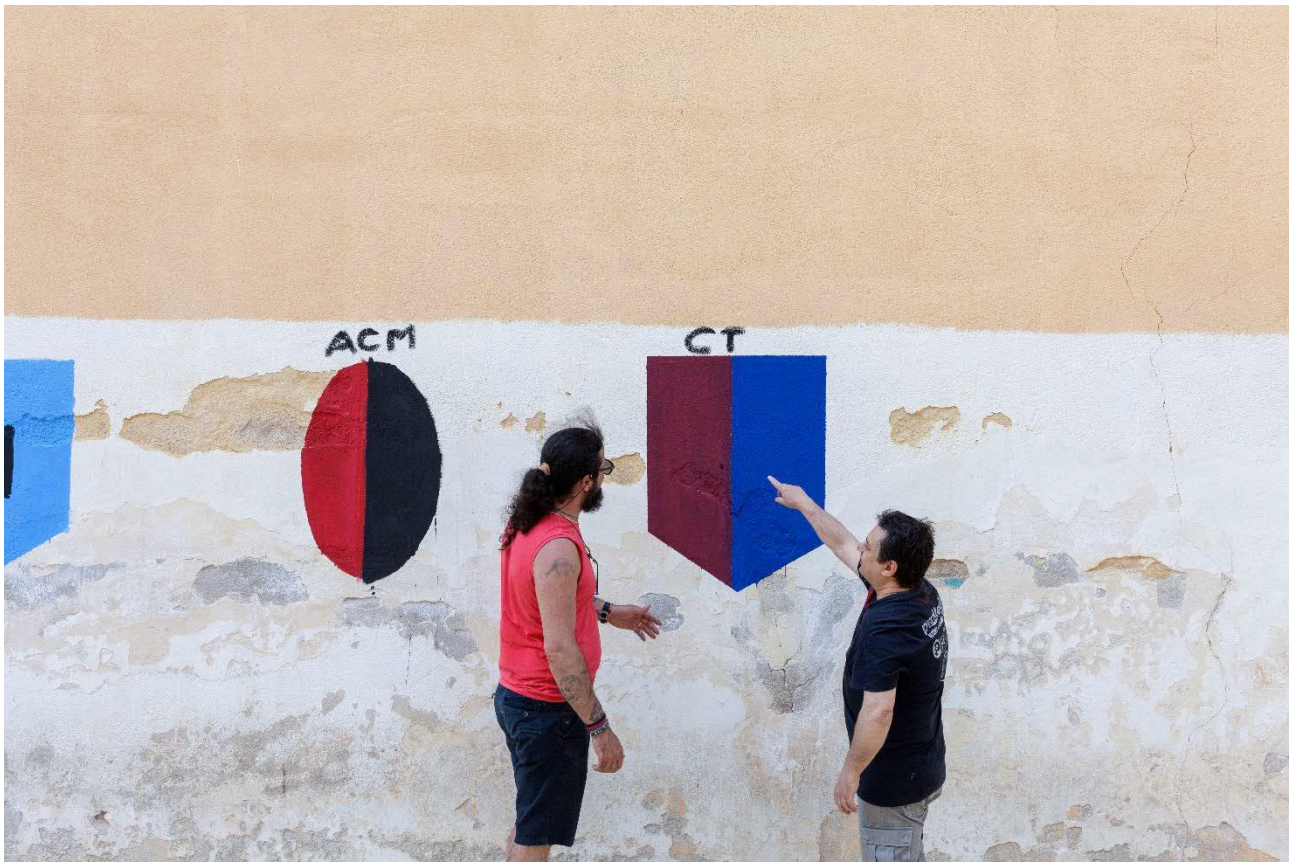
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Pagliarelli University: La scuola dei saperi, 2022

A project by Stefania Galegati at Pagliarelli Prison, Palermo

The Direction

My friend Ivano Marescotti once told me about his father, a peasant from Romagna. During the Fascist era, he used to sing the Internationale while working in the fields. They asked him why he was always singing and, without waiting for an answer, branded him a communist and sent him into *confino*, exile under guard, in Lipari. He was still a communist upon his return and declared that he had been to university, had learned French and had studied various other subjects.

The prisoners under *confino* turned correctional institutions into schools. This development was hardly the institutions' intention, though it recurred over several historical moments of vigorous intellectual and cultural censorship. The story of Antonio Gramsci's confinement in Ustica is a famous example. Although conceived for the isolation of political activists and intellectuals, the phenomenon instead led to an inverse educational outcome unsought by the Fascist regime, an event that of course has aroused much interest amongst exponents of radical education. Given the close kinship between the styles, techniques and themes of the graffiti in Palermo's Prisons of the Inquisition, I suspect that a similar exchange took place there also. These are two examples of radicalism during historical moments that savagely restricted intellectual and personal freedoms. In both cases, circumstances of forced imprisonment led to gestures of dramatic and moving resistance.

The Trial

The project *Pagliarelli University: La scuola dei saperi* (The School of Competencies) was developed in three phases:

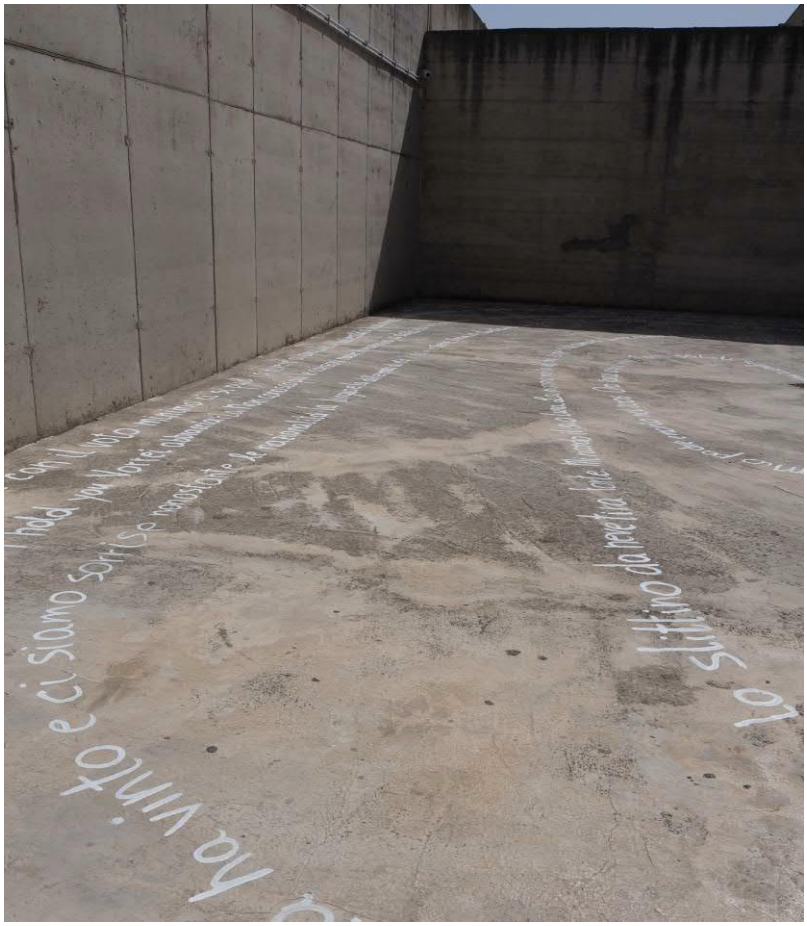
Phase 1: ten meetings in which female inmates, female guards and doctoral students pooled their knowledge and skills. We held workshops in dance, crochet, cappelletti pasta, baking pancakes, writing, drawing and painting. Each participant expressed whatever she wanted to share with her companions. Teaching things to one another, or sharing manual and repetitive activities, cultivates a nearness between people, an almost physiological intimacy. This state of relations often allows people to let themselves go, reducing the distance that circumstances

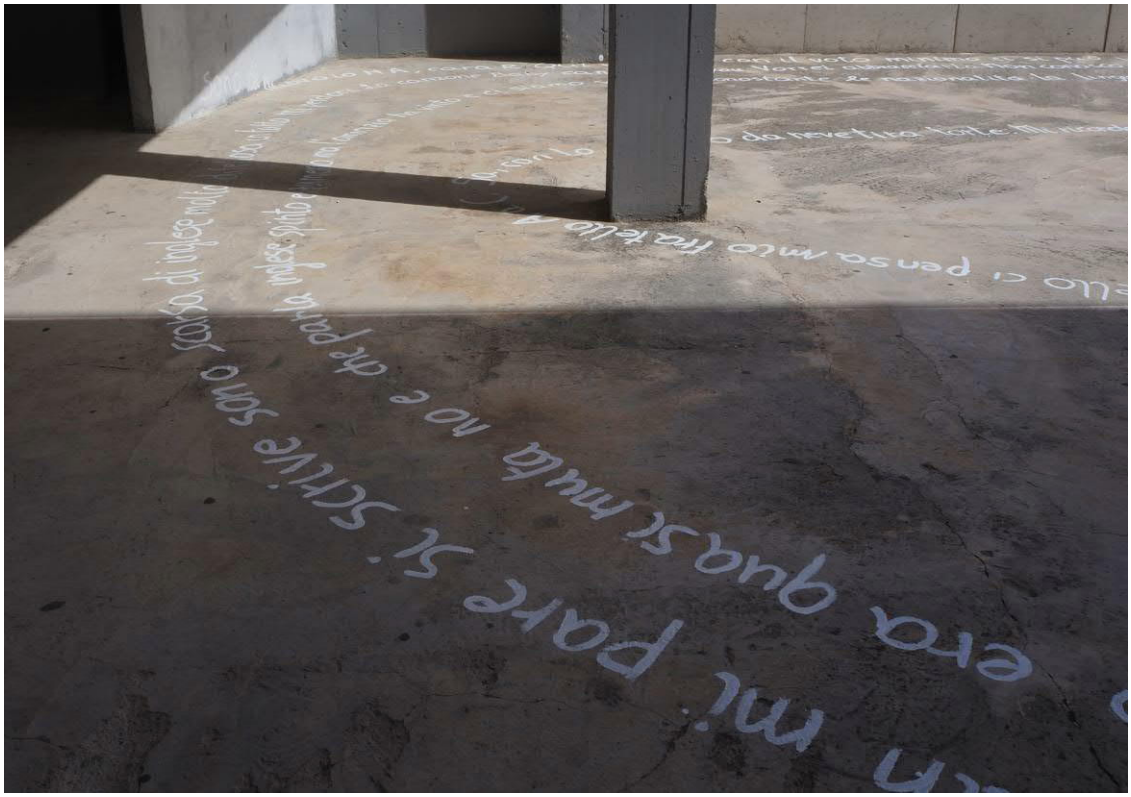
put between them. Certain sentiments and wishes were confided in me, which I then carried into the work that I created for the jail.

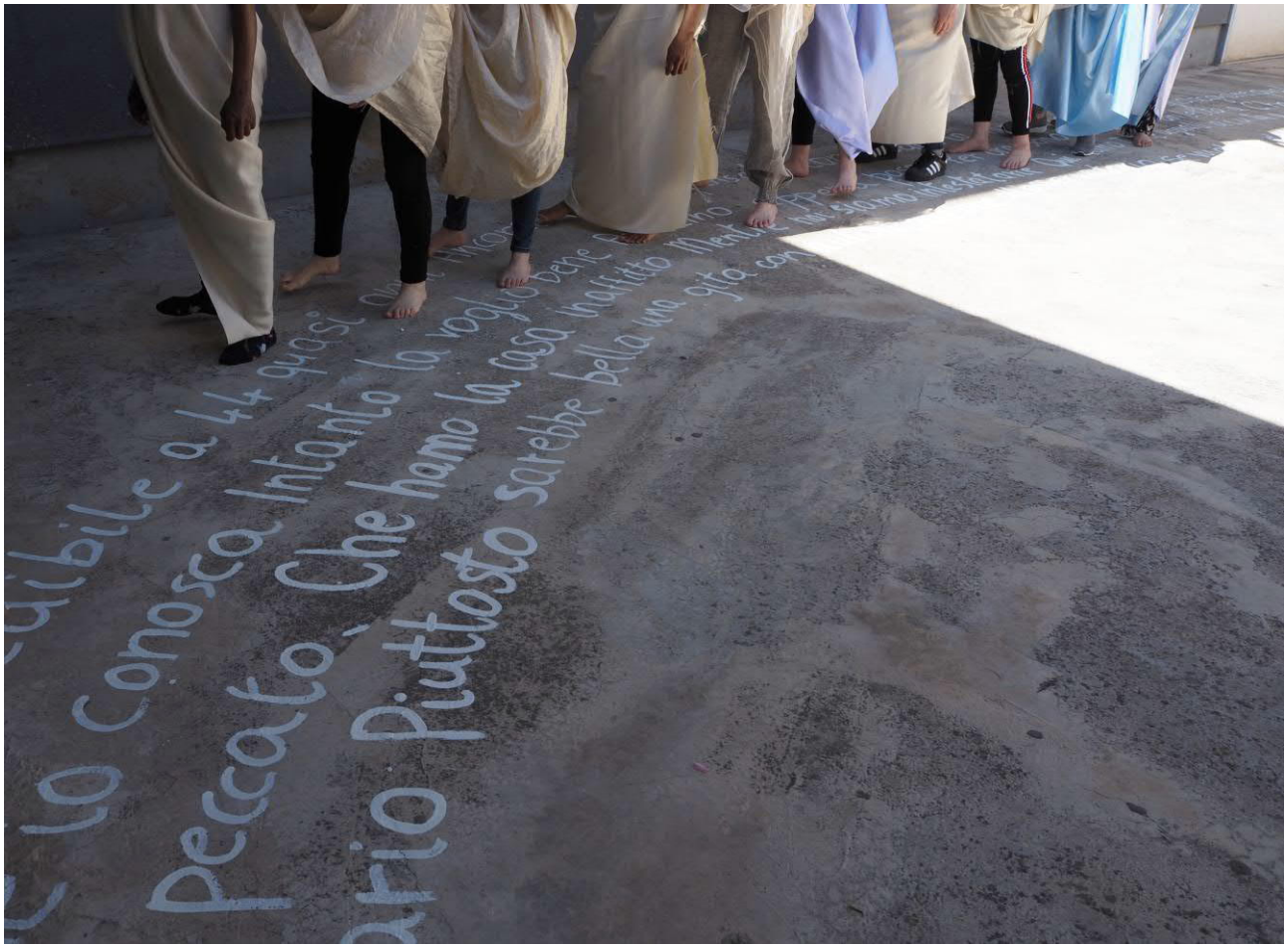
Phase 2: a work created on the paving of the women's pavilion's inner courtyard, replicating two letters sent from each of two women to the other. Their context is unclear; there is no telling who is inside and who out. They consist of a breathless stream of consciousness, rife with references. We wrote them on the ground together in white waterproof paint, all together: female inmates, female guards, doctoral students.

Phase 3: a video work in collaboration with Chiara Agnello, made with our four hands and two hearts. We asked the inmates to express wishes in the form of prayers. The filming became part of Chiara's workshop: we turned the girls into Saint Rosalias and staged dances, prayers and circular processions in the courtyard. Each of them recited her own prayer. One of the most moving was one woman's wish for an avocado stone from which to grow a seedling.

* Stefania Galegati, *Due lettere*, white paint, 2022.
Permanent installation in the courtyards of the prison Pagliarelli 'Antonio Lorusso', Palermo






Peccato Che hamo la casa inaffitto
Piuttosto sarebbe bella una gita


Salve
voglio la mia casa Dovrei
Per ora sono stanca
siamo tutte uguali


immagini in movimento Ho sempre voluto
si chiama Felix
Gatto in convento
satellite della Terra


come il satellite della Terra
si chiamava Luna
noi vivi. Cari saluti signora mia M.

'U Scantu': A Disorderly Tale. A Temporary Design Studio

A project by Elisa Giardina Papa at the 'Malaspina' Prison, Palermo

'Manca Anima' (The soul is missing)
From the graffiti left in the cells of Palazzo Steri

'U Scantu': A Disorderly Tale, A Temporary Design Studio was a collaborative workshop between the residents of the juvenile prison Malaspina, the GAP doctoral students, Professor Giovanna Fiume, and myself held in late October 2022. Taking as a starting point the graffiti drawn on the walls of the Palazzo Steri in the 16th and 17th centuries by prisoners of the Spanish Inquisition, we produced several garments to explore practices of creative resilience under confinement today.

We focused on a number of graffiti in the Palazzo Steri that were left by men and women accused of heresy. We selected an engraving of Saint Sebastian and that of a skull from the graffiti we studied, as well as an inscription: 'manca anima' (the soul is missing), and a drawing of a hand, an unidentified saint face, and a Leviathan; the inscription of the date '1633' and the line: 'Innocens noli te culpare; si culpasti, noli te excusare; verum detege, et in Domino confide' (If innocent, do not accuse yourself; if guilty, do not justify yourself; reveal the truth, and trust in the Lord). Under the guidance of Professor Giovanna Fiume, who has dedicated many years to the study of the Palazzo Steri graffiti, we engaged in a conversation about these inscriptions, the imagery and iconography. We also speculated about the lives and the conditions of those who were confined in Palermo already five centuries ago.

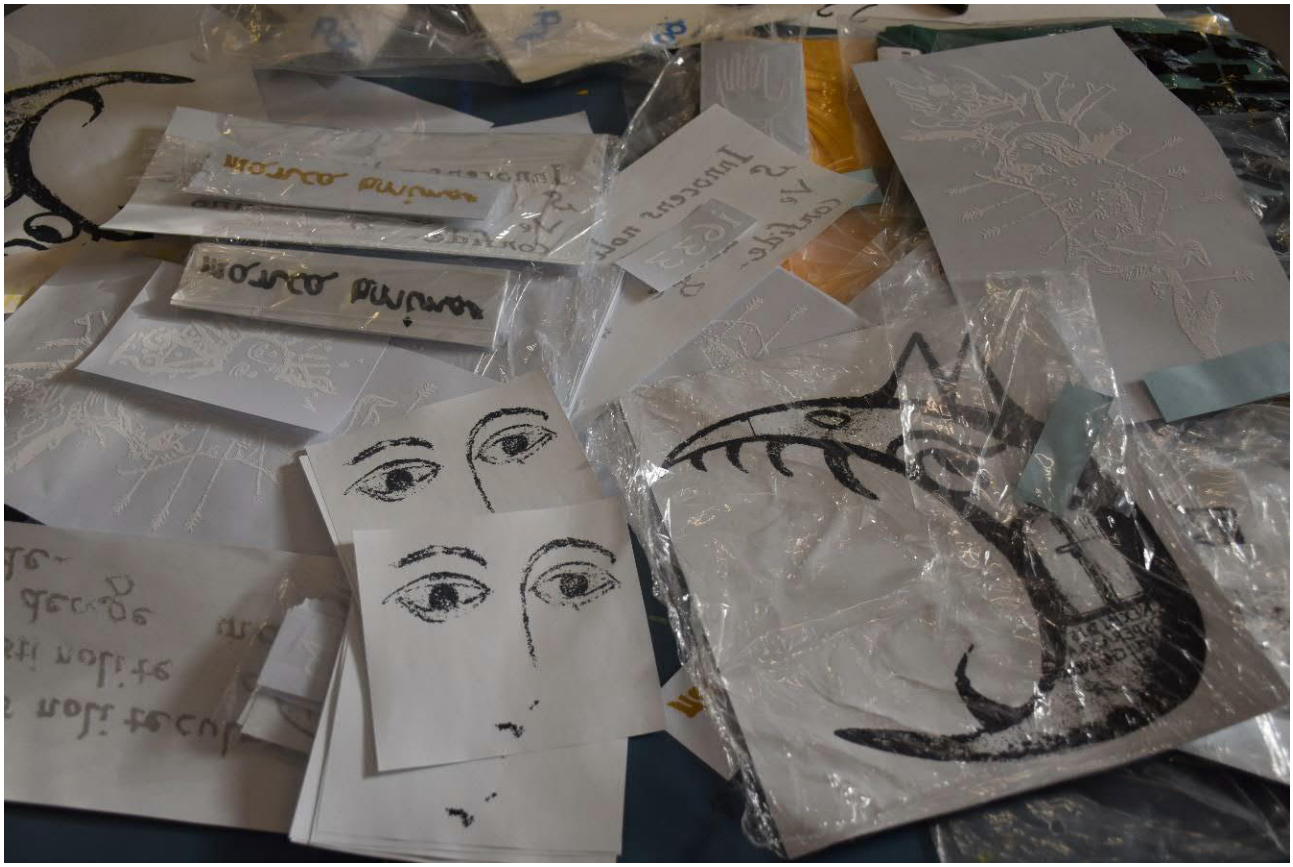
In dialogue with the selected graffiti, the residents of the Malaspina created new drawings and texts. They produced poems, and sketches adding to the original iconography, wrote song lyrics, and came up with a logo for a fashion brand called 'icon'. We transferred the selected graffiti and the new creations on vinyl paper and, using the sublimation technique on a heat press, printed them on shirts and sweatshirt hoodies. By the end of the third day, we realized that we had produced more than sixty garments. Many residents of Malaspina later gave these custom pieces to their beloved as a present.

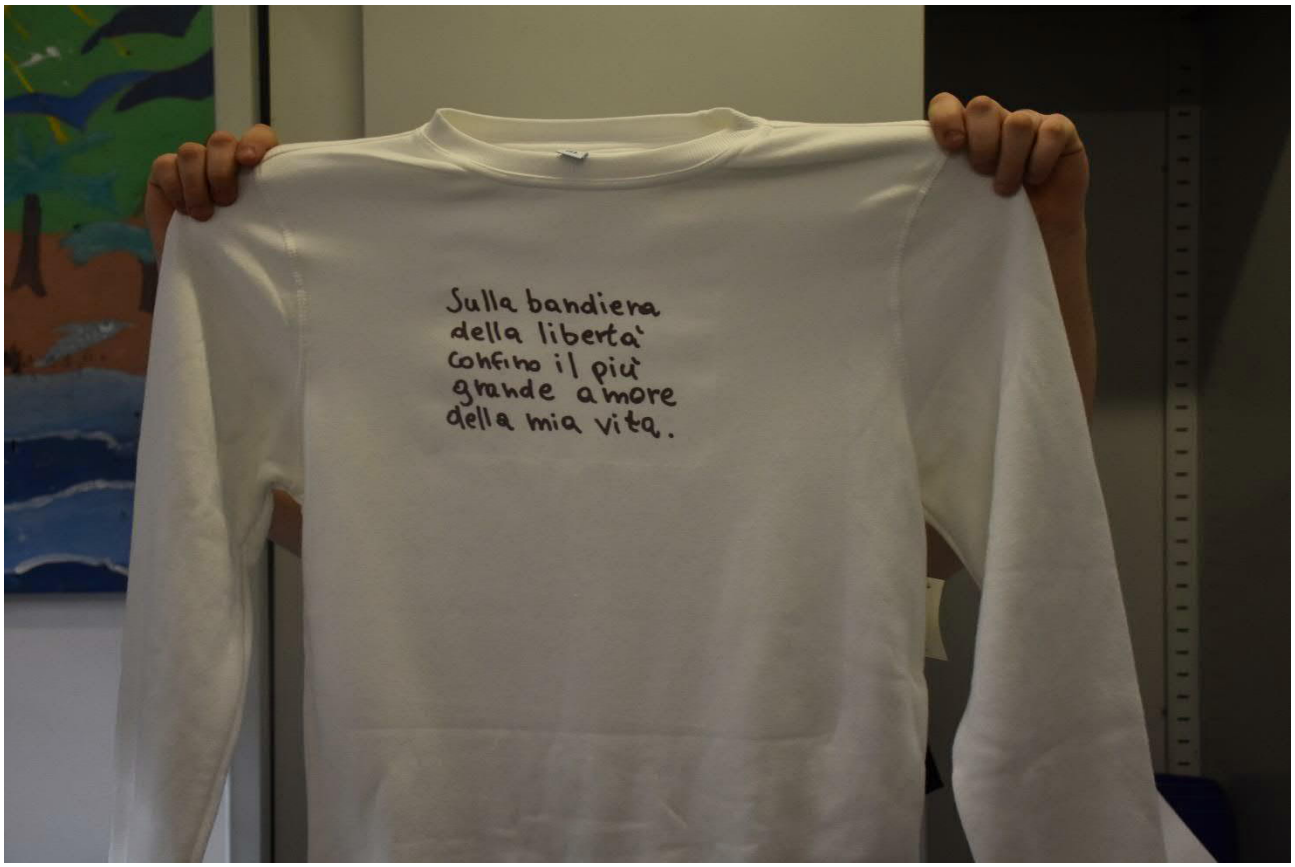
This note, which only briefly retraces the processes at work in those three days of collaborative study and creation, serves as a thank you to the generous creativity and is dedicated to the residents of Malaspina and the ‘art of making do’.

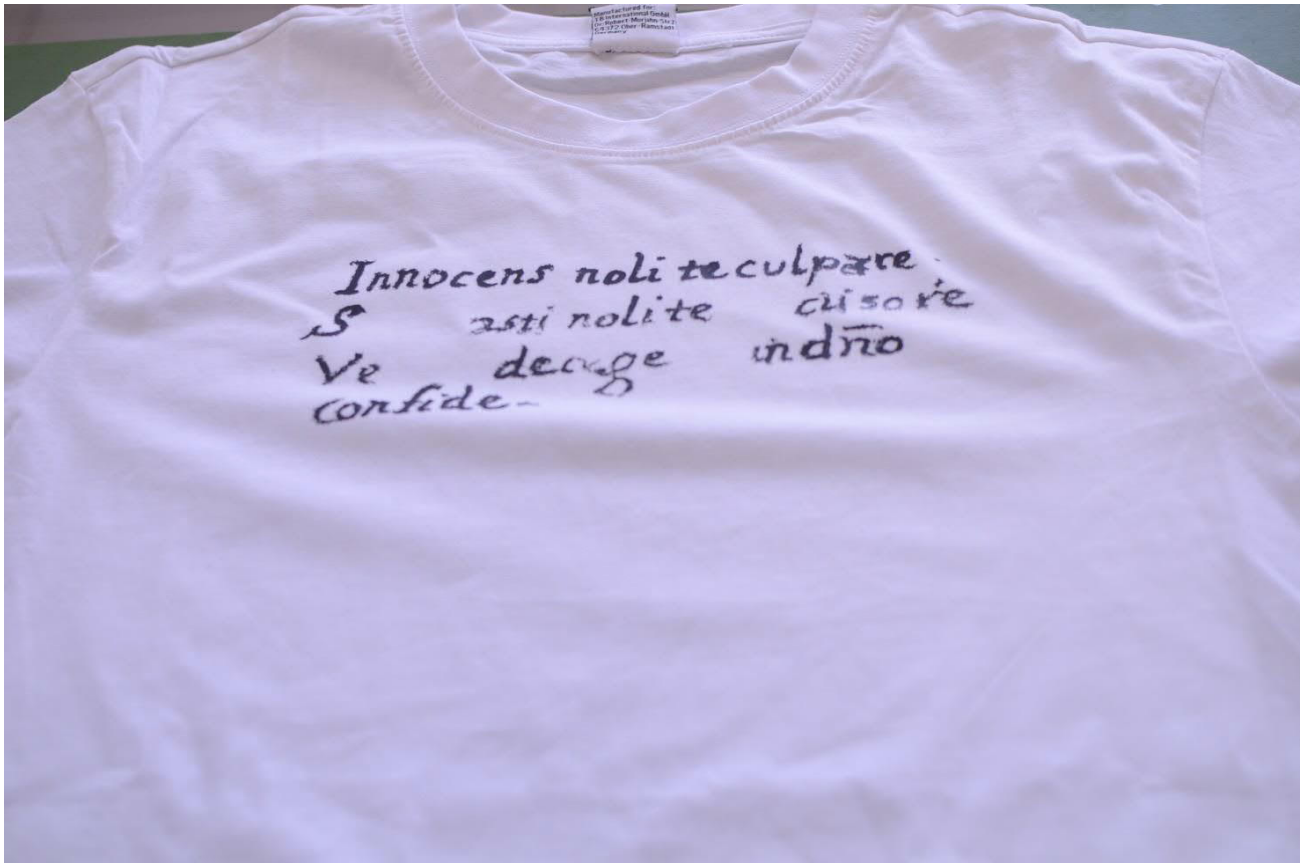
* Elisa Giardina Papa with Giovanna Fiume, 2022, Workshop on graffiti and writing on street-wear, Istituto Penale per Minorenni di Palermo ‘Malaspina’


DAVANTI
RETRO
OCCHI


WE CAME IN
PEACE FOR ALL!!
ENJOY
THE
WATERMELL
RIVER




Sulla bandiera
della libertà
confino il più
grande amore
della mia vita.


Innocens noli te culpare
S asti nolite cui so re
Ve deoge indño
confide-

Ucciardone and Pagliarelli

A project by Giovanna Silva

Note on the Text

Strange to say, this was not the first time that I entered a correctional facility as a visitor. But the others were abandoned prisons, architectures now emptied of their contents if not for the odd guard to oversee their abandonment. I have visited Pianosa, Gorgona and Asinara. Without people, my gaze only seized upon their structures, on the residues of time and its inhabitants. Here I will describe not what I photographed – a few pages ahead, if in doubt – but what I felt, since this was a more powerful cognitive experience than it was a photographic one.

Ucciardone

Late in May, I stand before a closed and sunstruck door, alone. No one enters, much less leaves. I have circled it many times, along the side that overlooks the sea. Strolling by morning, a wall appears, a glass turret, clustered flowers at the roadside, cars tearing along the overpass. Many times, I have taken a pause and imagined what might lie within. It is strange to construct spaces by imagination, spaces unseen, merely glimpsed on the news, places bound to historical moments or words, those words that mercifully can now be considered slightly obsolete but which defined the Italy of the late eighties: *Aula Bunker. Pentiti. 'Grand Hotel'. 41bis.*

I am dragged from imagination to reality through a simple (metaphorically speaking) security check. It is greener inside than I imagined. The structure is old, its character borne out in these huge plants whose majesty marks the passage of time. The director guides my wanderings, asking that I do not photograph the more sensitive corners, but I lack the sensitivity to recognize those corners.

To smother my embarrassment and not merely to distract him – and at any rate driven by genuine curiosity – I ply him with questions about his experiences: from Pisa straight to Italy's most famous prison. With his stories my imagination rejoins me, having momentarily been left at the sunlit doorstep; it is not so much the prison that I fabricate but the life lived inside it. A constant dailyness and a rhythm so metronomic that it kills. Rules and hierarchies even you have nothing left to trade in. Or that little takes on an unaccustomed value.

He says something that makes a great impression on me: ‘It’s harder to run a women’s prison than one for men; women, you know, they’re much more intelligent…’.

Pagliarelli (Women’s Section)

We arrive as a group with bagged cheesecake ingredients in hand. We head straight for the kitchens and everyone sets briskly to work, overcoming an initial phase of understandable and mutual embarrassment.

I am separated from the group and led about by a guard, who proceeds from a judicious mistrust to a transitory friendship. I am regaled with personal stories, incidents at work – and suddenly I don’t know whom to believe, with whom to empathize. I’ve been looking at it all from the perspective of the people who can’t leave, but now I’m confused. Life is hard on everyone. There aren’t necessarily any heroes in either direction, nor villains.

The common areas are the workshops, the classrooms, the art room, places that literally serve to kill time and thought.

I’ve got to capture all the inmates. We are in the yard, there is a blinding natural light harshened by a concrete wall that reflects and does not absorb.

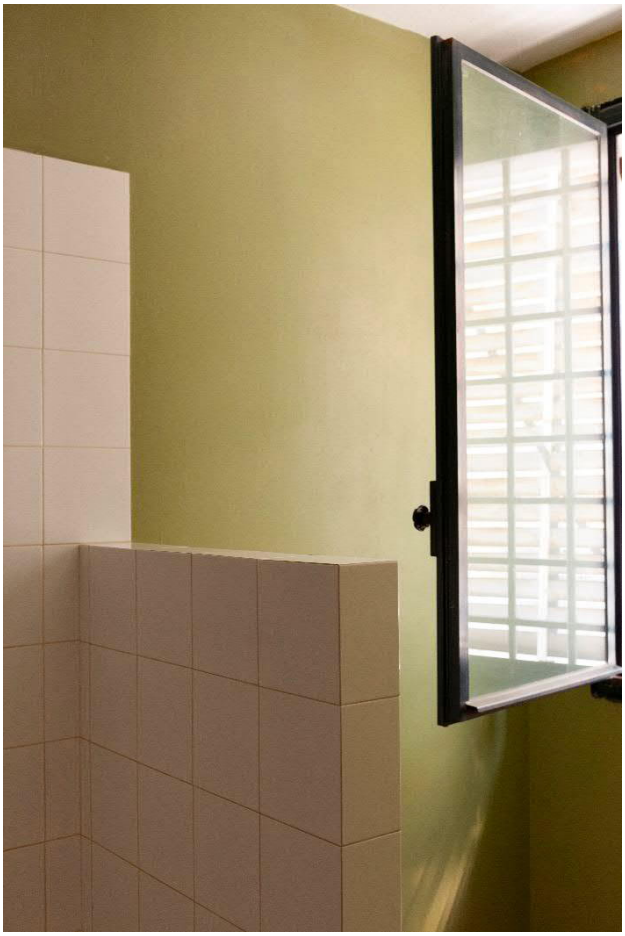
They file past one by one. I try to work as quickly as possible, to spare them the heat and spare myself the difficulty of the work I find most exacting, portraits.

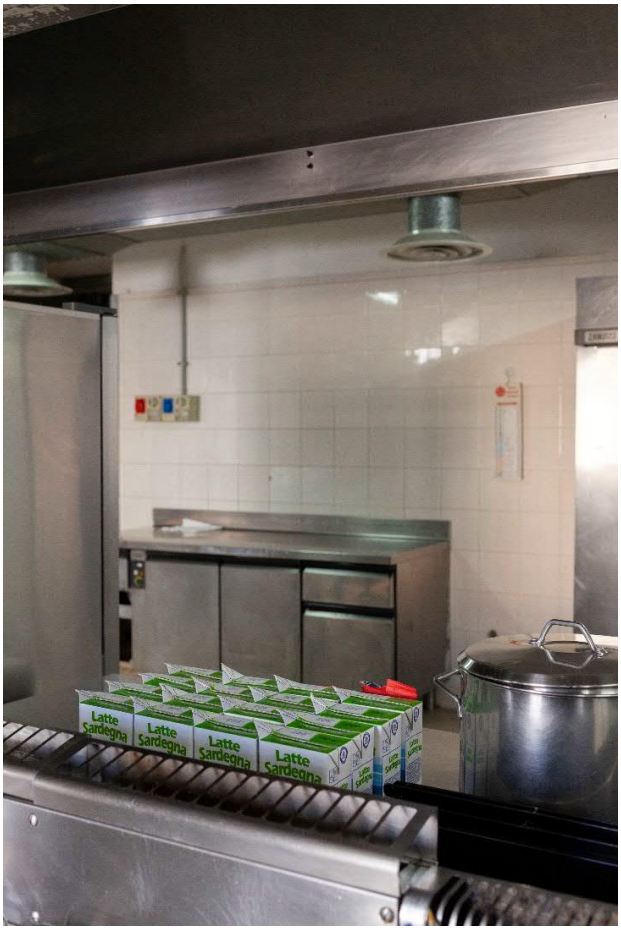
Whether by fault of too little or too much empathy I don’t know, but it’s something I’ve never learned to do, putting people at ease before the lens. I exert myself. I owe them recognition. I tell myself that I owe them this humble gift.

Upon my return, adjusting my eyes to the darkness, I behold the grand finale, a vision that even in dreams could not seem real.

My companions dance, beating rhythm with their hands and jumping up and down, led by the girls whom we have come to see, who display an extraordinary and enviable sense of music. Walls collapse, and barriers, even if only metaphorical ones.

[*] Giovanna Silva, photographs of prison environments, 2022, Casa Circondariale ‘Antonio Lorusso’ Pagliarelli and Casa di Reclusione ‘Calogero Di Bona’, Ucciardone, Palermo

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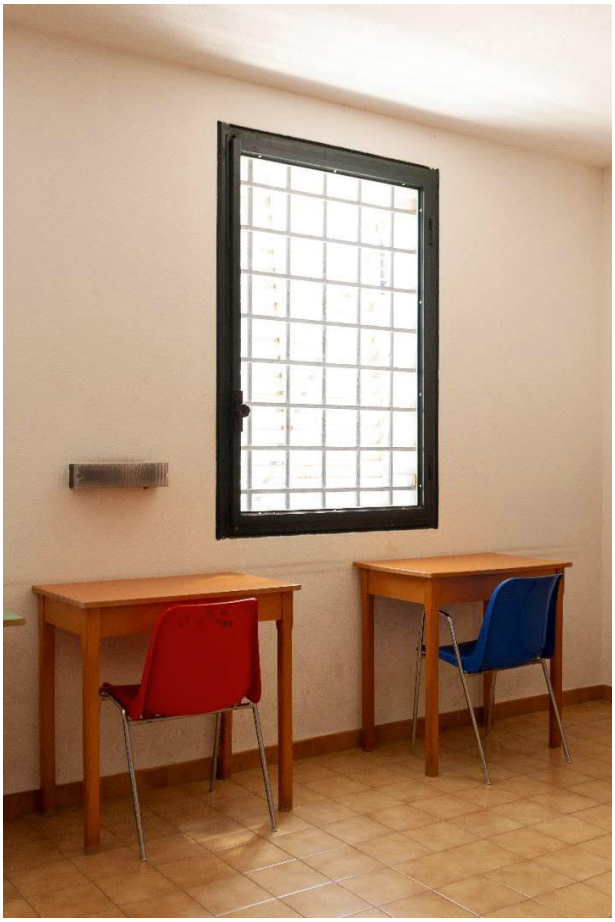
evolution



Old and New Prisons: Reinventing Carceral Architectures in Florence

Gabriella Cianciolo Cosentino, Christine Kleiter, Federica Testa

In Florence, the GAP Project decided to realize art projects in both the city's current prison in Sollicciano and the former prison Le Murate, putting in dialogue a modern institution with its historical precedent. The artists involved were asked to relate to the architectures and their social fabric, reinventing prison spaces with new creativity.

The *World of Fence* project held at Sollicciano Prison was conceived and directed by the French artist **David Mesguich** with the participation of the American photographer Martha Cooper. Mesguich is known for his graffiti and ephemeral installations that he collocates in public space: transit areas, non-places, borders, forgotten territories. With his monumental geometric sculptures, the artist challenges the boundaries and barriers that limit freedom of movement. In his work, the artist addresses issues of great actuality and social relevance, such as the migrant crisis and the prison environment. Mesguich's work at Sollicciano took place in several stages between 2022 and 2023, beginning with the design and fabrication of two largescale ephemeral installations made of multi-wave polypropylene (recycled plastic). The two sculptures portray the faces of an inmate and a guard and once placed on the prison fence, they symbolize its crossing. Both inmates and prison staff participated in the extended creative process. From a technical point of view, the digital processing of the portraits (3D scans and computer design) was followed by a practical phase, during which the plastic geometric modules were shaped, cut, and glued by hand. Finally, the sculptures were placed on the prison's outer fence and spray-painted. For security reasons, the works were dismantled shortly after their installation. Mesguich has also explored the portrait theme through murals: painted faces of inmates and policemen alternate on the gray walls of the prison courtyards. The artist involved both the 'inhabitants' of Sollicciano and the GAP PhD students who approached the graffiti practice collectively. The inmates created the murals with the help of the students, sharing ideas, brushes, spray cans and marks on the walls.

Martha Cooper, a well-known US American photo-reporter, is considered an icon of underground art – especially for her book *Subway Art* (1984), a collection of photographs

that for the first time documented New York's graffiti scene in the 1970s and 1980s. At Sollicciano, she witnessed Mesguich's entire creative and participatory process – the workshops, the art sessions, the participation of doctoral students – and the result is thousands of photographs that accompany all phases of the art project.

In the former historic Florentine prison Le Murate **Nicolò Degiorgis** has created a site-specific installation within the spaces of the contemporary art center MAD – Murate Art District. Degiorgis is an Italian photographer and founder of the publishing house Rorhof. Among his many artistic projects are works dedicated to the carceral context resulting from his experience as a teacher in the Bolzano prison. In January 2023, he was invited to an artistic residency at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut in collaboration with MAD. The result was the exhibition *102 meters*, where the artist made his works interact with the spaces of the old prison, repopulating them and emphasizing their value as a historical document. The opening, which took place in March during the study week in Florence, was an opportunity for the doctoral students to interact with the artist and follow the final stage of the installation.

102 metri

A project by Nicolò Degiorgis at MAD – Murate Art District, Florence

In February 2023 I was invited within the context of GAP to carry out research in form of a one-month artist residency at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck Institut for my project about the prison of Bolzano, where I have been teaching photography classes since 2013. I used the occasion of the residency, partially spent in the library of Kunsthistorisches Institut, partially inside a former prison cell at MAD – Murate Art District, to translate the two books I had previously published, *Prison Museum* [1] and *Prison Photography*[2], and a third one, still unpublished, *Prison Chronicles*, into an installation inside the former Florentine prison of Le Murate.

The title of the show stems from the distance between two spaces in the city of Bolzano that I have been documenting for more than ten years: the municipal prison and the modern and contemporary art museum of Bolzano. The two institutions are distanced mere 100 meters, indeed 102 meters, from one another in via Dante in the city center. On the backside they both face the park that runs along the Talvera river. Bolzano has the highest income per capita of any city in the country. Despite this fact, its municipal prison is housed in a rather decadent building dating back to 1870, which contains a number of prisoners considerably exceeding its planned capacity, and floating currently around 110 inmates. At a short distance from it you can find an oversized 54 meters long aluminium cube with transparent front and rear façades, which houses Museion, the modern and contemporary art museum of the city, and its collection of 4500 artworks. It was built in 2008 and since then it has been growing in scope and reputation.

At first, the museum and the prison seem to have little in common, but this apparent distance translates into proximity once conceptual parallels start to be drown between the two institutions. Both are meant to isolate from the surrounding environment, either to safeguard the outside from the inside, or the other way around. Both seem easily accessible, but still remain impenetrable for most people. *Prison Museum* manifests visually this proximity by sequencing a series of 102 diptychs, each composed of a scene within the museum and one

[1] Rorhof, Bolzano-Bozen (I), 2017.
[2] Rorhof, Bolzano-Bozen (I), 2021.

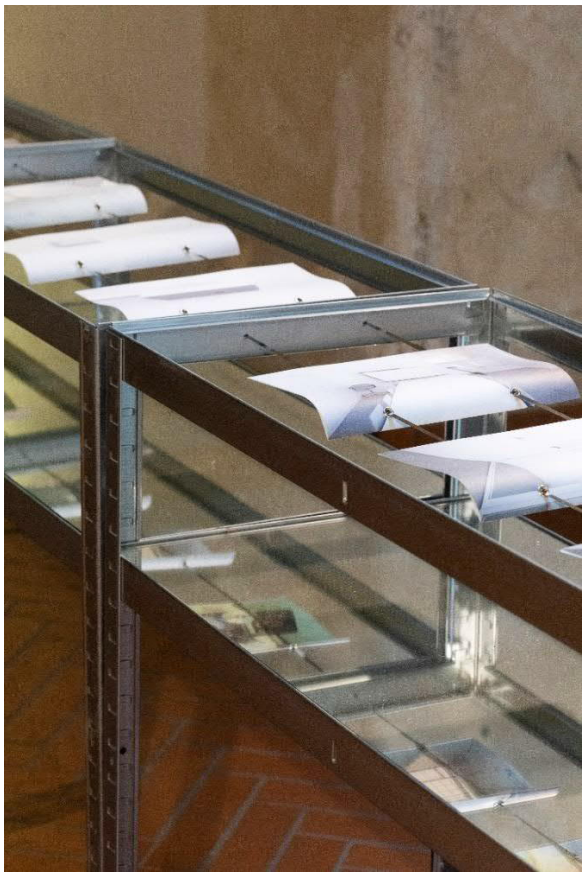
within the prison. The scenes are as meticulously similar as possible, in its formal composition as in its subject. One institution is reflected into the other one. The museum results as a white cube, where colours and curves seem absent, while the prison is covered with signs, drawings, graffiti and items of the people who have been inhabiting the spaces for over one and a half centuries. The sequencing of the images reflects an ideal walk through the institutions, starting from the outside, entering, and exiting again. The pages of the book were installed inside customized metal vitrines, facing upside the image of the museum, and downwards the image of the prison, in order to see the flipped image of the prison through a mirror beneath it. The pages were connected by metal bands and could be turned by the visitors.

The vitrines formed the two extremities of an ideal line measuring 102 meters. The line connected the two spaces that I used for the exhibition: the headquarter of MAD - Murate Art District, with an installation representing the art institution, and the former panopticon representing the carceral institution. The space between those buildings, formed by two courtyards, was connected with a line formed by the backside of the pages of my book that were plastered on the ground, one every meter, forming a dotted white line measuring a total length of 102 meters. The line connected the two interior spaces, while cutting the public space in half.

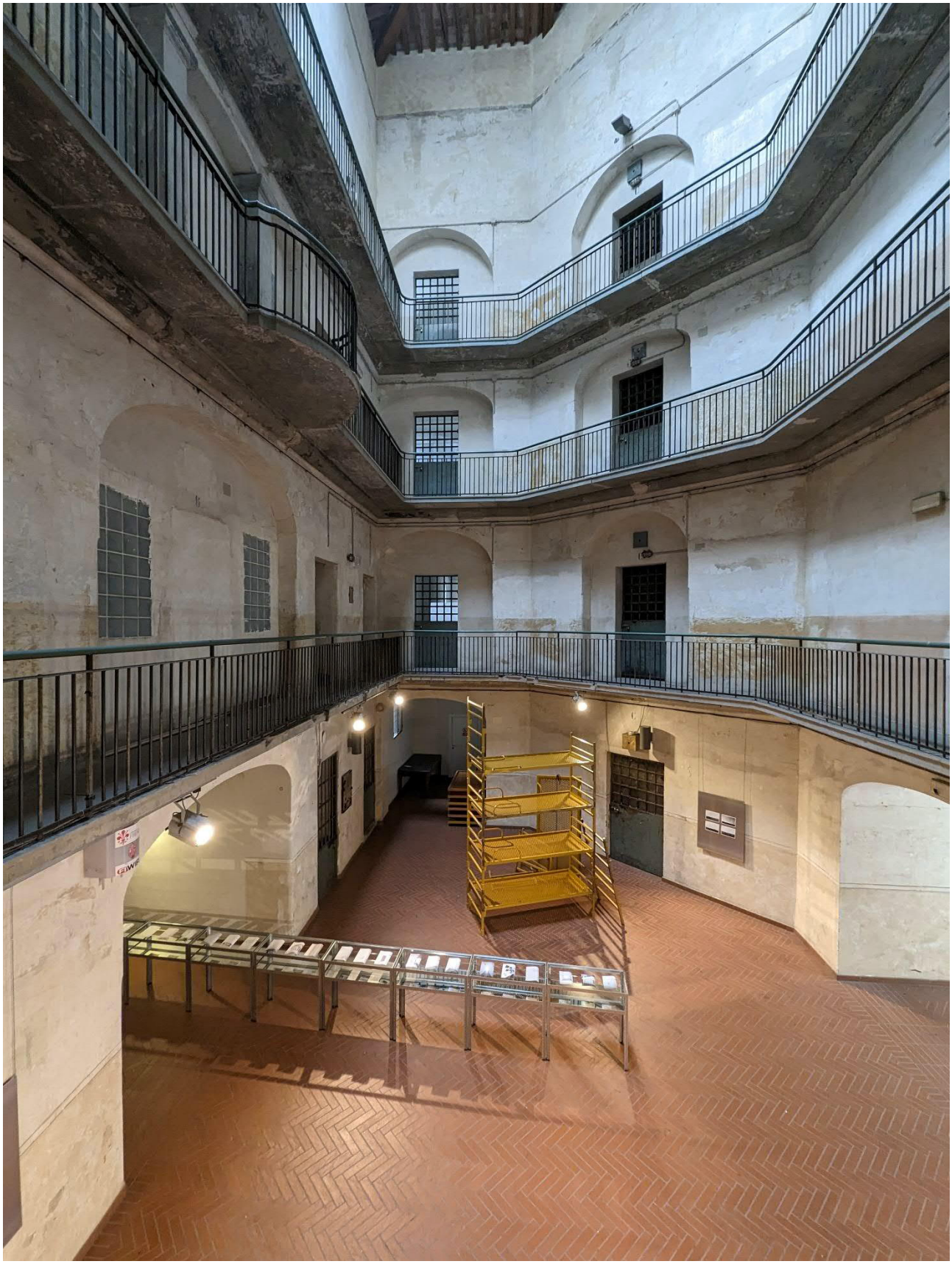
Aluminium plates used for offset printing were installed on the walls along the vitrines displaying photographs taken by the inmates of the Penal Institution and stemming from the book *Prison Photography*. Divided into thematic chapters spanning a range of photographic techniques, the panels reflected on the medium of photography as much as on its ability to act as a means of escape from the monotony of detention. Playing with and around the limitations imposed by the prison's own isolation, the images denounced the outside world as seen through the eyes of incarcerated individuals.

The third and last element presented in the exhibition was *Prison Chronicles*, a dummy composed of a series of articles gathered from the prison's own gazette and written by the inmates themselves between 2006 and 2018. Spread in single sheets on top of a metal bunk bed collected from the prison of Sollicciano in Florence, the pages of the book were sneaked out over the course of the exhibition by visitors, leaving only one left at the end.

*Nicolò Degiorgis, *102 metri*, 2023, installation and photographs, MAD – Murate Art District, Florence




MURATE
ART
DISTRICT



World of Fence

A project by David Mesguich at Sollicciano Prison, Florence

My contribution to the GAP Project is a research, but also an experience, a real-life laboratory, the starting point of a search for an impossible remedy.

In 2021 I was contacted by Gabriella Cianciolo Cosentino, who introduced herself as the coordinator of a project aimed at documenting the past and present history of graffiti in the prison environment. Having questioned this theme for many years through my various personal and artistic experiences, she proposed that I share my past experiences in French correctional facilities and at the same time create something new in an Italian prison. I accepted without hesitation, suggesting that we go beyond simply documenting or engaging with these spaces and instead modify them, challenging their restrictive nature with a riskier yet more ambitious approach. We both quickly became convinced that something powerful could emerge from it. My idea was to create several monumental installations within the prison walls and painting workshops: I was excited about the idea of transforming the facility. I proposed to bring to the project someone that would document the whole process with both a journalistic and artistic eye. I thought of Martha Cooper, the famous street art photographer whom I had met a year earlier in Belgium while I was painting a wagon in a train depot. After a brief exchange, she agreed to join me in Sollicciano prison and be part of GAP Project.

Prisons exist, that is a fact, and while it may be impossible to dismantle them for reasons that are evident to most, the foremost being that they represent the only solution found and accepted for societal problems. If I cannot destroy them, then they must be changed, questioned, and challenged piece by piece, wall by wall. I do not like prisons, but I do not allow myself to judge those who live in them or those who work in them. I am here to erase the invisible barriers that exist between the people who inhabit these spaces.

I arrived at Sollicciano with the idea of creating portraits of inmates, convinced of the relevance of my proposition. But once I was there, something else happened. Was this place different from the other prisons I had known until then? If so, in what way? Or was it just that I was looking at things in a different manner? Hard to say. I faced the same difficulties as in the other prisons I had visited, with some uncooperative guards who never missed an opportunity to show their disapproval of my presence. So what difference am I talking about? Well, the

difference is that some of these officers did the exact opposite. They offered their help and showed kindness, not only to me, but also to the inmates. I think this is something I had already experienced in the past during my visits to my father, and something I had eventually forgotten in the face of the negative experiences accumulated during my visits to the prison and in some of my artistic projects. I felt the desire to include them in my project: I would not just portray inmates, but also police officers. I would create them in the form of monumental installations and murals, without revealing who is who, erasing labels, signs of belonging, and keeping only the human landscapes. If barriers are poison to the mind, the mind is still the best remedy.

The prison is a sterile and tightly controlled environment, a separate world with numerous boundaries where access is subject to restrictions, making any intervention outside this context almost impossible. As a result, many challenges and obstacles arise. In spite of this, thanks to the penitentiary policemen Michele Verrengia and Gigi Di Martino, who helped me whenever something blocked, I was able to realize two 6-meter-high installations crossing the prison fence: a portrait of a female guard and a portrait of a male prisoner.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the project was the time I spent with the GAP Project graduate students, who came to help the willing prisoners create their murals in two workshops. I witnessed beautiful things: determination, creativity, respect, and kindness. There were also surprising encounters. The most memorable for me was meeting Giovana Prezoto and Miranda Arapi. I was surprised by my encounter with Giovana and her world. She is a gifted poet who writes, draws, and sings. While I saw her go through difficult moments where I tried to offer my support, she often gave me strength. She managed to transform this dark experience into something beautiful, a creative force that she used to narrate her daily life, her feelings, her questions through an illustrated diary that she kindly shared with me, Martha Cooper, and the other participants.

* David Mesguich, *World of Fence*, 2022–2023, Sollicciano Prison, Florence

Photo: Martha Cooper

Photo: Martha Cooper

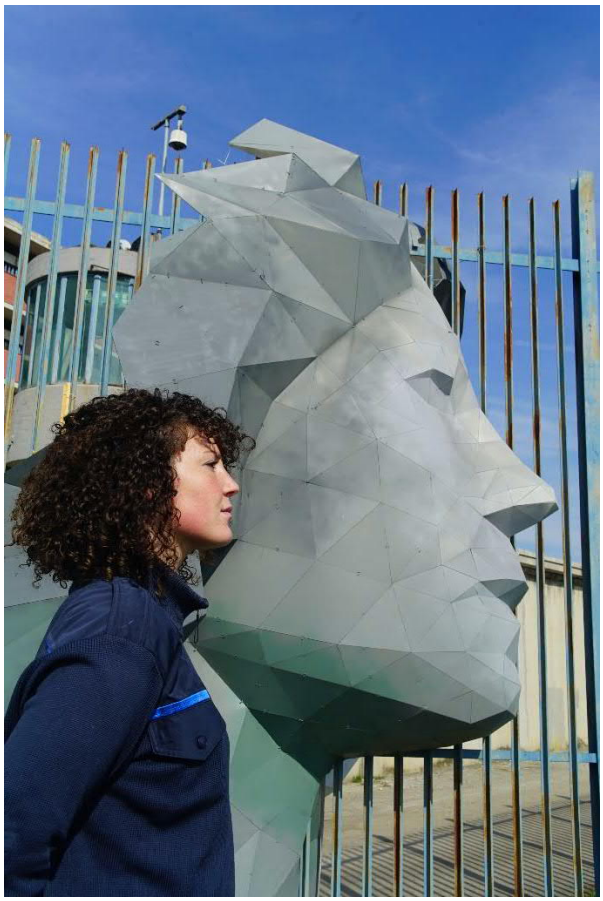


Photo: David Mesguich

Photo: Martha Cooper

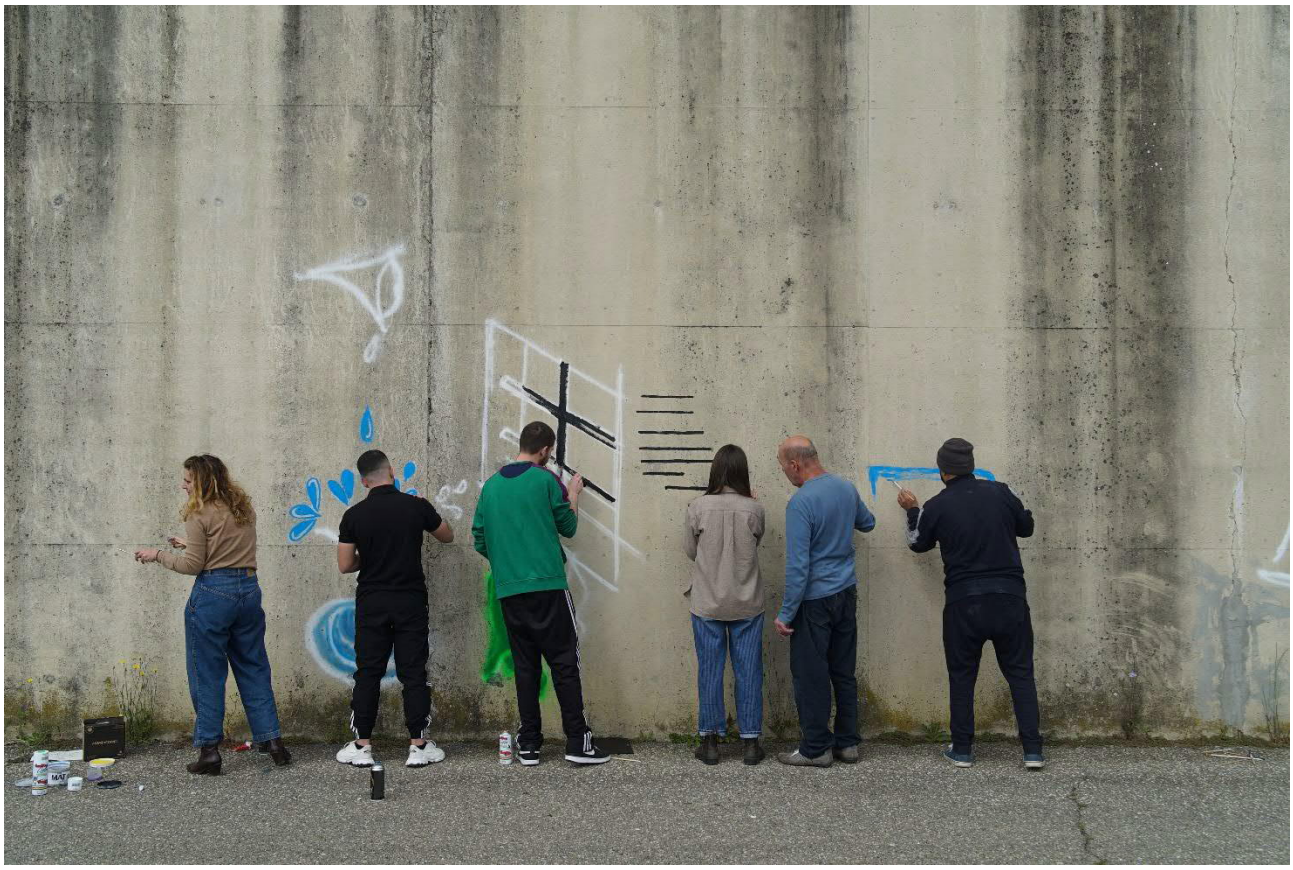


Photo: David Mesguich

Photo: Martha Cooper

Photo: Martha Cooper

Photographing an Illegal Art in a Prison

A project by Martha Cooper at Sollicciano Prison, Florence

I first met David Mesguich while taking pictures of graffiti writers illegally painting a train in Belgium. He briefly described the GAP Graffiti Art in Prison project and his workshops and sculptures at Sollicciano Prison in Florence and asked if I'd be interested in documenting them. Since graffiti writing is usually an illegal activity, the idea of photographing a legal graffiti workshop inside a prison was intriguing. Having had little experience with prisons except what I've seen in the movies, I imagined rows of bare cells with prisoners languishing behind bars. In fact, the few cells we were shown looked like college dorm rooms with comfortable beds and artwork hung on the walls. The rooms weren't even that small by New York City standards where many people live in small spaces. Unfortunately, I was not allowed to photograph the cells.

Understanding what and who I was or was not permitted to photograph was a challenge especially since I don't speak Italian. Most of the visible security details were off-limits including locks on doors and random guards who had not given us permission to photograph them. David held his graffiti workshop in a room which looked like an ordinary classroom. In the photos, the narrow prison windows with a glimpse of the outside in the background are the only visible evidence of the location. I was happy to be able to get a photo of someone cleaning a security camera mounted in the ceiling with a broom.

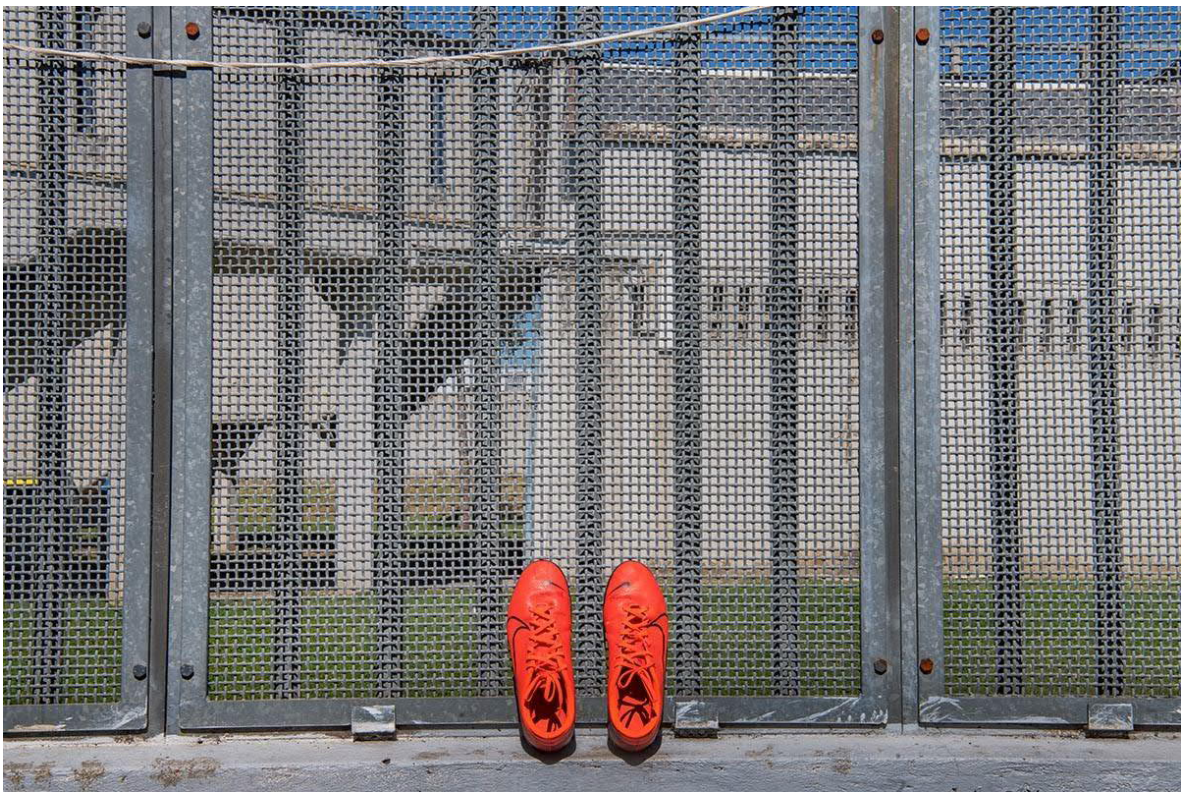
David was given his own room to create his large-scale art project consisting of two huge, faceted portrait sculptures of a female guard and a prisoner. Although I had plenty of freedom to take pictures of his laborious, complicated process, I had a hard time showing that he was working inside a prison. When David transported the pieces of the sculpture outside, I was finally able to get some images which combined his art with the impressive architecture of Sollicciano Prison. I was, however, reprimanded by a guard for taking a photo of David as he carried a piece of sculpture across the inner courtyard. Although the prison guards were mostly friendly and helpful, I had to be careful not to push their boundaries for fear of being denied further access.

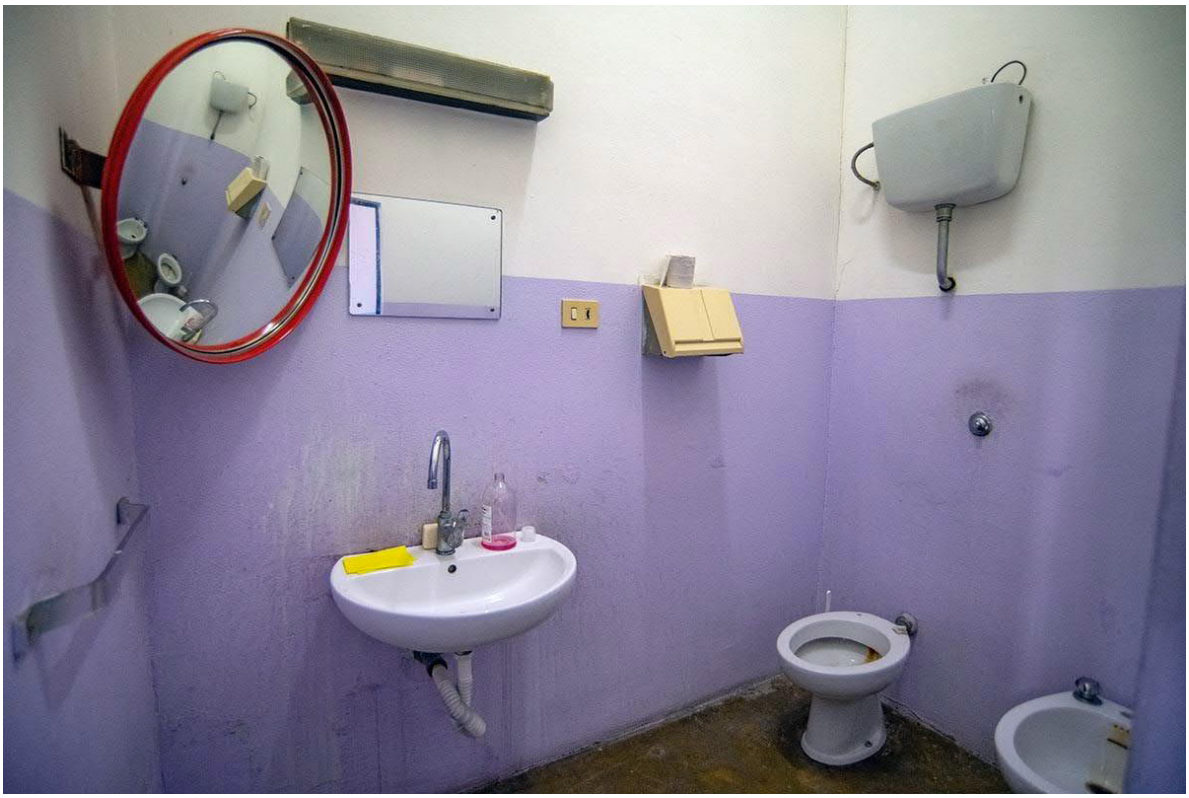
On my second trip to Sollicciano, I was able to photograph a graffiti workshop with prisoners painting on the walls outside the prison along with academics from the GAP Project. Because inmates dress in their regular street clothes, I sometimes had difficulty identifying who was who. Again, my challenge as a documentary photographer was to find an angle which showed both the artists at work and the prison environment. Because the art was being painted on the bottom of very high walls, I had to shoot at an acute angle in order to see the prison although this was not the best angle to show the art.

Graffiti Art is sometimes called 'style writing', an apt name which refers to artists (aka 'writers') stylizing the letters of their names. The term graffiti is also used to describe all kinds of non-stylish, unauthorized writing on public surfaces. David had shown me some interesting examples of ancient, or at least historic, graffiti he had seen in a prison in Palermo. I had hoped to find some of this unsanctioned writing by prisoners in Sollicciano. We were able find a few modern examples scratched into a wooden desk and into tape on a window. Probably there were more in places I was not allowed to go such as the inmates' bathroom.

Taking pictures of finished art on a wall is easy. Walls don't move. However, a straight-on, still photo of art on a wall doesn't show the tools and techniques of the artist or the surrounding environment. The best photographs of street art give the viewer an idea of how and where the art was made. The highlight of my Sollicciano experience was when a group of guards came by to help David lift his sculpture into place on the exterior fence. I was happy finally to be able to take photos which not only showed David's sculpture in the context of the prison, but also the positive interaction between the artist and the institution.

* Martha Cooper, Photographs at Sollicciano Prison, Florence, 2022–2023






POLIZIA PENITENZIARIA
POLIZIA PENITENZIARIA


You CAN YOUR
destiny
Scelte
Cultura
Arte
open
your
mind


Mamadou Lô

My Diary

Giovana Prezoto

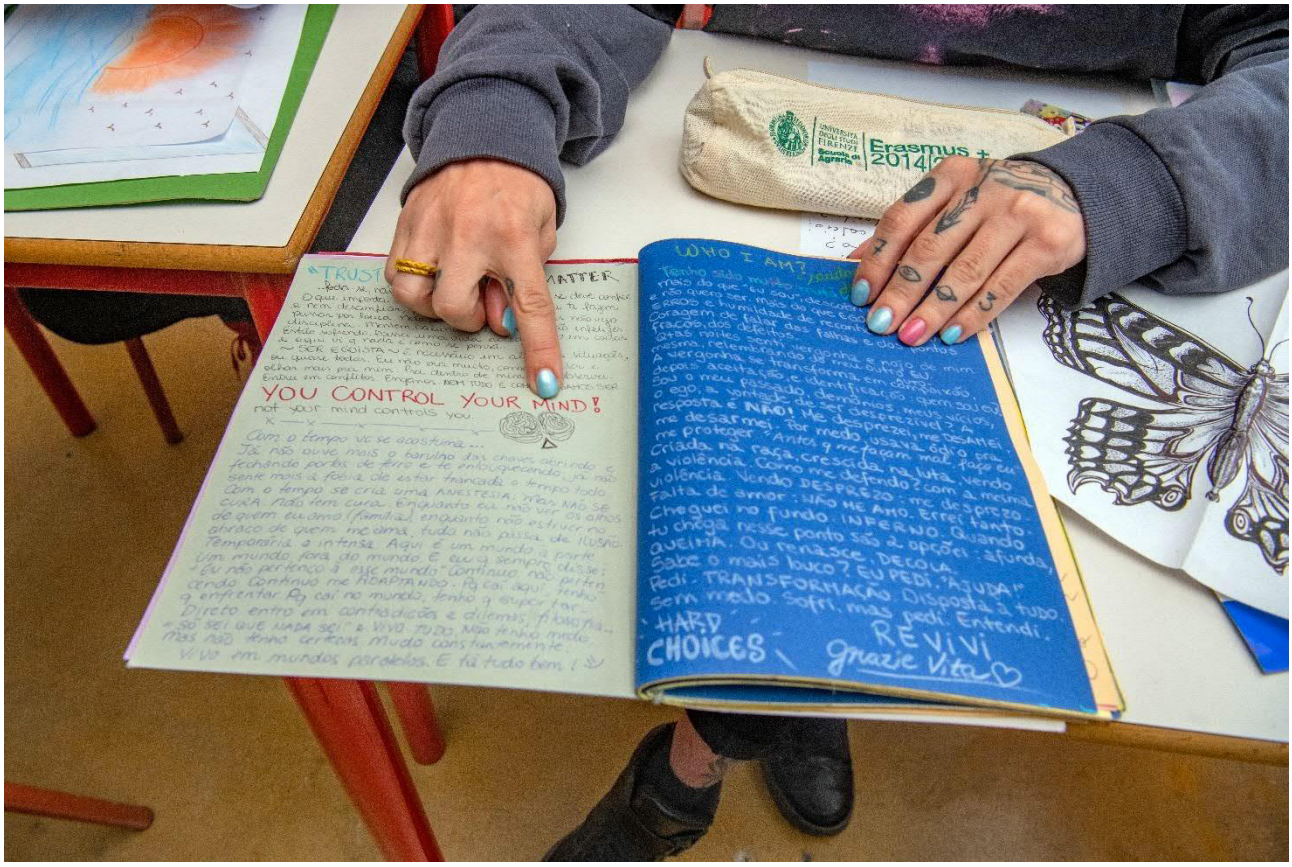
My name is Giovana, I'm 29 years old and I come from Brazil. It doesn't matter how I ended up in the place where I had the chance to participate in this wonderful project with incredible professionals. After all, what matters is the destination and not the road that was taken. As they say in Italy: 'The end justifies the means'. And I can say that being part of this experience rewarded all the suffering and difficulties that brought me to it. I can say that I fulfilled a dream, inside a nightmare. Yes, because art is my life and my dream is to practice art every day. Meeting Martha Cooper was one of my dreams, when I was just another young woman in Brazil who admired art, street and hip hop culture. I never imagined being around people like Martha Cooper and David Mesguich. I'm honest, Martha's work I already followed and David's work I had the honor of meeting here, and I was very moved. Like Martha's photographs that tell stories of immortalized moments, David's works convey an indescribable emotion. Following the creation step by step until the result of a graffiti and a sculpture was one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen and it will be impossible to forget. All the professionals involved in the project encouraged me to learn and develop my projects as well. Because I always liked to draw, but I never believed that I was good enough. They taught me that you don't have to be 'good enough', that just believe in what you do and it will come true. I managed to expose my creation on a wall for the first time, using spray paints for the first time (it was my biggest fear of getting the strokes wrong) and I discovered that it really is difficult and requires a lot of technique, commitment and experience to become a graffiti artist. Anyway, the result did not disappoint me, it awakened in me the will to continue learning and to do other graffiti. Furthermore, those days we spent working on this project were like an escape from reality, while I was there learning, observing, listening and creating, it felt like I was somewhere else outside those walls. I confirmed a theory that I've always believed in: art can save lives. Just as it saved mine, in times and places where I didn't seem to see the light, the touch of art struck me once again, showing me the way.

Thank you, art. Thank you, Gabriella, David, Martha.

Thank you to the volunteers who made it possible to finish my drawings on the wall,

Thank you to everyone who was part of this project. I will never forget!

Photo: Martha Cooper



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