

Presentation of some processes of insertion through culture in European towns

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Three types of artistic insertion respond to the necessity of bringing art to neighbourhoods in European towns.

- The first is that of public art, which is illustrated by a sculpture by Jaime Plensa, living in the “El Born” neighbourhood in Barcelona. It concerned a gift of art to the public by a gallery artist, very well-known in the art world. This sculpture was erected in a place where people were used sitting down to have a rest. It was thought that this sculpture would be appreciated in this particular area. However, the people of the neighbourhood (which was a deprived area) were not at all pleased that so much money was spent in order to “steal” the place which they appreciated.
- Museums and galleries corresponding to a second type of public intervention. The Picasso Museum, and several art dealers are established in the rue Montcada, in the same neighbourhood of Barcelona. Still in the historical centre of Barcelona, in the Raval neighbourhood, the new Contemporary Art Museum of Barcelona (MACBA) and several small galleries are changing the image of the area. This example of the installation of the Museum is also being seen as a kind of parachuting of public and institutional art in the neighbourhoods.
- There is a third type of artistic intervention, but this time from the bottom to the top: the communities or workshops of artists who have settled in certain neighbourhoods. The “Palo Alto” is an industrial infrastructure, a relic of the sea-faring past of Barcelona in the 19th century. Javier Mariscal, a highly-regarded designer thanks to the Olympic Games, installed his workshop here, and many other artists came to the “Poble Nou” neighbourhood.

One can find many other examples of a strong artistic presence in certain neighbourhoods. For example, in Tacheles in Berlin-East and in Brixton in the north of London. In this peripheral area - there is no underground station - a large population of artists live in re-used industrial buildings: garages transformed into art galleries like Richmond House where, apart from the workshops of artists from the SPACE organisation, the Flowers gallery and the Momart enterprise are installed; a large building in Copperfield Road is the headquarters of ACME, another big London association which offers workshops to artists: a disused weapons factory is now the Chisenhale Studios... One could mention the “Belle de Mai” at Marseilles, originally a building belonging to Seita, and which now welcomes all sorts of artists. In Liverpool, the Albert Dock and former warehouses, one finds not only art, but also clothes, music and products aimed at young people. The social process of this kind of intervention is as follows:- first, the arrival of the artists who vitalise the neighbourhood, then the designers, then the professionals (gallery owners, cafés, and even museums). These areas then become fashionable and artists are often obliged to leave because of rent and price increases.

How can this phenomenon be avoided? In ensuring that artists remain there, in encouraging them to stay, in two ways. The first encourages continuity by helping the artist to become the owner of

premises (this is the case with the Chocolate Factory in London). Then, like all owners, he or she looks after the building in question... The second is that of foundations who offer studios to artists and also give them the means to receive the public (like Temple Bar in Dublin or the Delfina Studios in London).

