

A Qualitative Investigation into Street Art in an Indonesian City

Authors : Michelle Mansfield

Abstract : Introduction: This paper uses the work of Deleuze and Guattari to consider the street art practice of youth in the Indonesian city of Yogyakarta, a hub of arts and culture in Central Java. Around the world young people have taken to city streets to populate the new informal exhibition spaces outside the galleries of official art institutions. However, rarely is the focus outside the urban metropolis of the 'Global North.' This paper looks at these practices in a 'Global South' Asian context. Space and place are concepts central to understanding youth cultural expression as it emerges on the streets. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblage enriches understanding of this complex spatial and creative relationship. Yogyakarta street art combines global patterns and motifs with local meanings, symbolism, and language to express local youth voices that convey a unique sense of place on the world stage. Street art has developed as a global urban youth art movement and is theorised as a way in which marginalised young people reclaim urban space for themselves. Methodologies: This study utilised a variety of qualitative methodologies to collect and analyse data. This project took a multi-method approach to data collection, incorporating the qualitative social research methods of ethnography, nongkrong (deep hanging out), participatory action research, online research, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Both interviews and focus groups employed photo-elicitation methodology to stimulate rich data gathering. To analyse collected data, rhizoanalytic approaches incorporating discourse analysis and visual analysis were utilised. Street art practice is a fluid and shifting phenomenon, adding to the complexity of inquiry sites. A qualitative approach to data collection and analysis was the most appropriate way to map the components of the street art assemblage and to draw out complexities of this youth cultural practice in Yogyakarta. Major Findings: The rhizoanalytic approach devised for this study proved a useful way of examining in the street art assemblage. It illustrated the ways in which the street art assemblage is constructed. Especially the interaction of inspiration, materials, creative techniques, audiences, and spaces operate in the creations of artworks. The study also exposed the generational tensions between the senior arts practitioners, the established art world, and the young artists. Conclusion: In summary, within the spatial processes of the city, street art is inextricably linked with its audience, its striving artistic community and everyday life in the smooth rather than the striated worlds of the state and the official art world. In this way, the anarchic rhizomatic art practice of nomadic urban street crews can be described not only as 'becoming-artist' but as constituting 'nomos', a way of arranging elements which are not dependent on a structured, hierarchical organisation practice. The site, streets, crews, neighbourhood and the passers by can all be examined with the concept of assemblage. The assemblage effectively brings into focus the complexity, dynamism, and flows of desire that is a feature of street art practice by young people in Yogyakarta.

Keywords : assemblage, Indonesia, street art, youth

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