

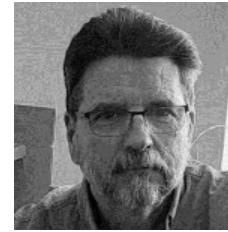
## MURAL ART IN THE WORK OF JOSÉ RÍOS

### From personal experience and glancing through history

After an introduction to mural art and a glance through history for its contextualization, this article focuses on an interview with the artist José Fernandez Ríos on the integration of his plastic work in contemporary architecture. This article draws attention to an aspect that often, in the world of art, takes second place to the work itself: the thoughts and words of those who create it. The paper takes a look at different forms of mural expression of civilization, from the first manifestations in caves to contemporary architecture, its techniques and styles, from classic mural art to clandestine graffiti, in order to establish analogies and differences. Walls are part of our daily landscape and streets and buildings have been increasingly transformed into a cosmos of pictures where citizens become viewers with ambivalent opinions. This kind of intervention is a modern way of expression that is increasingly extended and sometimes overwhelming. It can express

protest and criticism and can function as a tool for social and educational integration (Martinez y Barba, 2013).

Contemporary mural art, authorised, tolerated or clandestine is increasingly gaining ground in our culture, turning into a tourist attraction for many cities. This is the case in Berlin, Melbourne, New York, London, Rio de Janeiro, Bologna and Barcelona, among many others, where specialised companies offer urban art guided tours. Through this article we try to learn more about this phenomenon from the perspective of a creator: José Ríos.



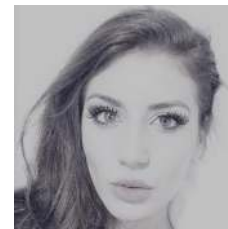
**Fabián García-Carrillo**  
Technical Architect and Fine Art Degree. Full professor at the Department of Engineering and Architectural Graphic Expression, teaching in the Higher Technical School of Building Engineering and in the Fine Arts Faculty of the University of Granada. Interested in the interrelation between architecture and art, both in the field of building and urban space.



**José-Antonio, Benavides-López**  
Building Engineer and Technical Architect. Full professor at the Department of Engineering and Architectural Graphic Expression, teaching in the Higher Technical School of Building Engineering of the University of Granada - Spain. Specialist architectural surveyor and researcher on surveying, photogrammetry, laser scanning and heritage documentation.



**Claudia, Moreno-Romero**  
Last year student of Building Engineering bachelor's degree, at University of Granada - Spain. Beginner's researcher on photogrammetry and built heritage, developing its Final project in traditional architecture of Tetouan, Morocco.



**Angie, Benavides-Castillo**  
Journalism bachelor's degree student at Complutense University from Madrid Spain. One-year academy at LUMSA, University from Rome - Italy. Specialized knowledge in communication and television presentation.

**Keywords:**  
mural painting; architecture and building; urban art; graffiti; José Fernandez Ríos

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *Origin and authors*

The article emerged from the interest of the authors, teachers and students (the occasionally researchers) in areas such as architecture, building and territory, plastic arts and journalism, for so-called urban art. It is approached through the difficult relationship between different types of mural paintings that appear in our cities and the architecture that holds them or suffers them, in its artistic face as well as in its social repercussion. This article takes the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the work and the direct opinion of an artist who is currently producing it and who offered to participate in this academic "experiment" as an additional author of the article.

### *Object and field*

Many aspects are included and could objectively be taken into account when understanding urban art, based on previous cultural approaches and with regard to large-scale projected interventions as well as improvised and anonymous manifestations. We usually assume that the location is essential for this art to fully work and harmonize with its context, as is the case with the work of the artist in question. In this work, we have the opportunity to contrast this assumption with a subjective approach to the issue. As a basis for the investigation, we will examine the opinions and works of one of the authors, who is one of the most important creators of urban art in our environment.

### *Justification*

Using specific experiences, we will collate and revalue the capacity of mural art as an integrating element in architecture. We simultaneously call attention to the work of this contemporary author and his personal and specific interpretation of the idea of renovation of the urban-architectural space. We assess the results of this specific case and determine whether it can be extrapolated in certain universal aspects, giving rise to conciliatory encounters with the most underprivileged contemporary architecture.

A brief conceptual and evolutionary review of mural painting will serve as a cultural reference for the approach to José Ríos. The interview aims to better understand and appreciate, based on purely subjective postulates, the artist's strategy in the conception and realization of his work as well as his particular sensitivity to the confrontation with architecture and the space in which he intervenes.

### *Goals and purposes*

In this article, we intend to emphasize the importance of mural art as an integrating element for the design and conception of certain buildings throughout history and its influence on the qualification of buildings themselves and in the definition and appreciation of the urban landscape. All of this is considered the antecedent of contemporary urban art. It is important to emphasize, however, that the mural painting that we consider here from the perspective of urban art is one that, questioning its values, does not transform the physical reality of existing buildings; it only transmutes them temporarily, even at a symbolic level, using humble and ephemeral materials. This transforms a space or building, in the general appreciation of its inhabitants, into something attractive and singular.

Mural art, specifically graffiti, have become more prominent and perhaps violent in their reappearance as democratized as well as anarchic urban art as the control over the environment exercised by architecture and by advertising has become stronger and more influential for our vision. For this reason, we are also interested in exploring the process of choosing environments for urban artworks. When we compare the results, urban art can provide an excuse to discover ignored spaces around the city.

### *Structure and content*

This article is divided into four sections. After the introduction, which justifies and helps to contextualize the object, scope, interest, purpose and content of this work, we proceed in a second chapter to review the relationship between mural painting and architecture, including its main milestones



Fig. 1 - Funeral mural painting. Luxor, S XV bC.



Fig. 2 - Mosaic. Issos battle. Pompeii S I bC.

from the first cultures to the present. A succinct theoretical, conceptual, and historical analysis is presented of the process of convergence and divergence that has led to today's urban art through the unstable relationship between mural art and architecture. Through the interview presented in the third chapter, which focuses this work as original research, we aim to understand how this phenomenon is concretized and synthesized in the artistic thought of José Ríos, both through his manifestations and through the analysis of his most significant work. Finally, the fourth chapter is dedicated to the conclusions drawn from this work, which, although focused on the temporary

and ephemeral urban art of a single person, seeks what may be transcendent in it.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### *Architecture and mural art*

We consider architecture and mural painting with regard to the difficult relationship between them in current urban art and in the work of José Ríos. Historically, this was an asymmetric or unbalanced relationship from the perspective of scales, technologies and their durability.

Mural art, specifically painting, has been defined as “art that is executed on a wall as a support”. But, this definition would be incomplete unless we keep in mind the true intrinsic concept, which is to be part of an architectural space, in a way that is perfectly harmonized with the environment: building, room, lighting, colours, shapes, etc (Falcón, 1995). Furthermore, wall painting “does not depend exclusively on it, but on the architecture that surrounds it and on the colour and shape of the immediate spaces” (Doerner, 1984).

Several traditional techniques of mural art have been used throughout history in close connection with architecture. These techniques include fresco mural painting, especially used during the Renaissance; three-dimensional sculptural relief on the surface of the wall; ceramic murals consisting of small pieces of glazed pottery of different colours, typical of Muslim art; and tesserae mosaics similar to the above but made of small pieces of glass or stone. Modern urban art takes advantage of architecture and incorporates other techniques, such as spray painting, directly or on templates.

Mural art, as an intrinsic component of architecture itself, is a welcome part of architecture. It brings meaning to the building and the architectural space in which it is carried out and which it configures. Historical works of mural art cannot be isolated; they must be considered in accordance with the architecture and the space in which they will be integrated. Contemporary mural art, generally alien to previous architectural design, either brings its own message outside of the architecture itself, which it parasitizes, or intrudes



Fig. 3 - Sistine Chapel, The Vatican. S XVI.

into existing architecture and alters the message that the environment receives from it.

### *Historical origins and evolution*

Historically, architecture has used figurative decoration, sculptured or painted, as an integral way to define itself and give it meaning. Attempting to separate ornamentation from architecture would therefore destroy a conceptual, historical and aesthetic unit (Martínez García-Otero, 2001). Interventions that are aesthetically dissociated from the building itself but that use and integrate it as a support for their artistic expression deserve different treatment. Currently, there is a certain discomfort and a lack of common agreement when architecture and mural paintings come together. However, from the perspective of urban art, they need each other. Let us contextualize this relationship by conducting a brief historical review of its evolution.

The link between mural art and architecture dates back to prehistoric times. Cave paintings have an aesthetic function and a certain unknown mean-

ing. Although caves are not a human creation, they can be seen as an antecedent to the relationship between painting and living space. In the first constructions, the need to decorate the spaces generated is maintained with the addition of geometric drawings or with a meaning that is unknown.

In Egyptian civilization, temples, palaces and tombs are full of plastic manifestations on their walls to be seen and read, paintings and reliefs loaded with symbolism as well as with narratives of daily life (fig. 1). In Greek culture, monuments were painted, although few remain. An example is the frescoes of the Tomb of the Swimmer in Posidonia. In Rome, the walls of buildings, both inside and outside, were covered with stucco and were considered both pictorial and advertising supports for posting notices and shop signs (Canales Hidalgo, 2006). The high-quality Roman mortar allowed the creation of more durable frescoes and the long-lasting mosaic technique (fig. 2), a technique that Rome bequeathed to Byzantium.

After Constantine declared Christianity to be the religion of the empire, buildings for worship be-



gan to be built with murals for educational purposes. For the illiterate faithful, who were the majority, it was easier to understand the Gospels this way (Canales Hidalgo, 2006). Due to the Byzantine influence, churches were decorated with mosaics with the aim, in addition to more functional solutions for their walls, that the house of God would be admired for its proportions, beauty and materials. Thus, religious buildings gained architectural value, although the Middle Ages represent a notable delay.

In the Renaissance some elements of Greek and Roman architecture and painting were recovered, including frescoes and wall decoration. The architecture increased with the geometry, and decorations began to be a clear addition that took a shape, the relief, to replace the painting on the outside. Art became personalized and proliferated. Artists, architects, sculptors and painters, like Paolo Veronese or Andrea Pozzo, dominated the perspective and realism and anticipated the prominence of space in the relationship between the work and the viewer. Fresco paintings, whose techniques were perfected, were relegated to interiors, where they were spread out on vaults and walls. The magnificent proportions and perspectives of the buildings and architectural spaces provided new complexity to these murals, in which *trompe l'oeil* plays with the spectator, mixing real architecture, fiction and nature. A clear example is the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel (fig. 3), which involved the intervention of Michelangelo and Botticelli, among others. The influence of mural art during this period continued for several centuries, but even today, in the region of Liguria (Gulf of Genoa), the tradition of painting the facades of historical centres with *trompe l'oeil* is maintained (fig. 4).

The Modern Movement in architecture replaced the Modernism that emerged in the first decades of the 20th century, giving rise to the so-called "International Style", which developed in Europe in the period between the two world wars. However, it was after the second war that it expanded to the rest of the world. It is distinguished by the incorporation of new materials such as steel,



Fig. 4 - Palazzo San Giorgio, Genoa. S XIII – XVI.

glass or concrete in an architecture of pure volume, basic geometric forms without ornamentation and smooth facades. Breaking with previous periods, architecture was "rationalised" and stripped of all superfluous decoration, including murals. Mexican muralism was the exception; it managed to maintain a certain conjunction between mural painting and this new architecture (Rios Garza, 2010). Mexican murals, despite being supported by the new architectural style, acquired their own life.

The new architecture aspired to build functional, economical and changeable buildings with limited durability to adapt to future social changes that the movement predicted. The current architecture is heir to the Modern Movement, but today, many of its walls are filled with so-called urban art, paintings and graffiti, although most of the time, they ignore each other.

#### *Graffiti. Urban mural art*

Graffiti is defined as a signature, text or pictorial composition generally made without authorization in public places, on a wall or other resistant surface. This illegal or clandestine form of execution is a distinctive feature (Blanco Pont, 2003). It is not closely related to architecture and usually does not take into account the impact it may have on the building or the environment. However, there is no doubt that today's urban art includes graffiti, from which cultural vandalism must be excluded. In graffiti, there are two "movements" that emerged more or less at the same time in different parts of the world, although their purposes and the resources used were different. The best-known one emerged in New York in the 1960s. Originally, these were signatures in the form of brands made with spray paint or on stencils. Many young people, seeking notoriety despite remaining

anonymous, left their signatures on trains, subways, walls and, above all, in risky places. This movement did not reach Europe until the 1980s. However, with the revolutionary movements of May 1968 in France, students and workers took over the streets, and in their protest messages, they used the stencil technique. These graffiti contained slogans or messages censored by the media.

Today, it could be said that both movements, in their most evolved artists, converge to combine messages that are both iconic, with a strong symbolic load, and vindictive, in that they sometimes incorporate into the architecture, but only to make use of it. Banksy (fig. 5), both anonymous and highly valued, is probably the most internationally known graffiti artist. In our environment, the popular "Niño de las Pinturas" (fig. 6) has an unmistakable style that mixes a particular mastery of the use of aerosol with free strokes, a safe and amazing plastic effect, designs of a strong visual impact and semantic charge, and symbols and texts as poetic as the drawings themselves. The success of these authors proves, although not in the way of historical mural art, that graffiti, whether rebellious or not in its relationship with architecture, is indeed urban art (Mezzanato, 2018). It is a cultural phenomenon and a clear context in which to frame the more peaceful works of José Ríos.

It is necessary to clearly differentiate mural painting in historical architecture from current painting, which is not always attentive or integrated into the aesthetics of the building, although it sometimes attempts to improve its image. In addition to the message itself, in the new representations, there are many other aspects to be taken into account, such as the magnitude, the means, the technique, the orientation, the visibility and the distance of observation (Randrup, 2009). These are new murals that, in the common public space, are exposed to the critical opinion of a plural society that receives them in an ambivalent way as democratic art (Manzoni, 2019). This social recognition is one of the fundamental elements of their valorization and conservation (Rivera et al, 2000).

<http://disegnarecon.univaq.it>



Fig. 5 - Banksy, Migrant child - Venice 2019.

### 3. THE MURALIST JOSÉ RÍOS

#### *The artist*

José Fernández Ríos, better known as José Ríos, is a multidisciplinary artist who has developed his creativity in areas such as painting, sculpture, murals and public art in different formats. This artist from Jaén, born in Orcera in 1962, has developed intense artistic work that turns public spaces, building facades and roundabouts into authentic open-air museums.

Ríos is a painter with a hyper-realistic influence in his origins and with some incursion into vindictive graffiti who has been transforming his style, his atmosphere and his workspace from the realistic to the conceptual, from the private to the

public, and from the easel to the building, turning the walls of buildings into canvases that act on the architectural and landscape identity as well as on the consciences of observers and offering a reason for reflection as well as a new cultural dimension to spaces.

The aesthetic-emotional values of José Ríos' mural painting do not go unnoticed, managing, with an extraordinary mastery of technique and scene, to alter the perception of the landscape and awaken the senses and emotions of the most unsuspecting spectator. Through a personal interview, we attempt to learn how he handles this relationship between architecture and painting through his particular interpretation of mural art, his creative and operational process, and his emotions.



We attempt to understand what is universal about it and what can be extrapolated.

### *The interview*

In recent years, most of Ríos' works have been done outdoors. They have been municipal projects in which he has had the opportunity to express his free and refined style using the architecture and space as well as the sociology of the place as a source of inspiration. We focus on some of these throughout the interview. We do not provide a literal transcription of questions and answers but rather a commented extract of a rich and enjoyable conversation. José Ríos defines himself as a self-taught artist who understands current mural art and architecture as a combination of mutual needs, although not necessarily coincidental, that he tries to harmonize. He says that he has had this artistic concern to be noticed in the streets, which we call urban art today, since he was a child. Throughout his career, the artist has intercalated a variety of techniques, distinguishing between what he considers "interior art" in the studio and "exterior art" or urban art, openly acknowledging that he feels a greater inclination towards the latter. He humbly claims to be a little-known artist, although he is already on Wikipedia and has become a reference for urban art in many cities in Andalusia and won many prizes and awards.

### *The murals*

For José Ríos, artistic creation has no rules and does not follow a method. It is an imaginative process, the result of his experiences, which allow him to create an idea, a meaning, something that is capable of provoking reflection and transmitting emotions and that is also integrated into harmony with the space where it is to be carried out. The final result of a mural must always be the sum of the iconography and the meanings proposed by the artist and of the physical and sociological elements of that place. This is a task of great responsibility. He searches for the intimate and reflexive interaction of mural painting with architecture and society, that distinguishes it from other pictorial manifestations of urban art, such as graffiti, that are the result of improvisation or that



Fig. 6 - El Niño de las Pinturas – Asillah 2013.

only seek a condensed message or the artistic and personal satisfaction of the person who makes them. An example of this interaction is his work "Reflejos del jardín", Estepona (Málaga), 2015 (fig. 7). This mural of approximately 2,400 m<sup>2</sup> might be the largest in Europe to be executed individually. It extends the limits of the Orquidiario botanical park over the buildings that surround it, broadening the residents' perception of both the park and the buildings. The superimposed painting over the building highlights the prominence of the natural landscape. In this case, the workspace has been imposed by the needs of intervention, but José Ríos believes that the artist himself should choose the location of the mural, bearing in mind multiple conditioning factors:

- The function of the place and the public space determines the nature of the proposal.
- The urban environment and the architectural typology, including light orientation, which conditions the motif.
- The visibility of the work and dynamism force us to control the different points of view from which it can be observed.
- The accessibility, size and proportion of the mural condition the viability of its execution, even economically.
- The auxiliary and safety means necessary for its correct execution that condition the technique and planning.



Fig. 7 - Reflejos del jardín

From the perspective of conception, one of the aspects he considers most important is to ignore the division of matter, architectural support, and creative space through the use of trompe l'oeil. Prolonging the sky within the painting, creating virtual spaces, or incorporating the surrounding vegetation are some of the graphic resources he uses. He plays with the architectural environment, shading and perspective, and he invokes the complicity, even emotional, of the observer who ends up being the protagonist of his work.

The realization of a mural is usually divided into two distinct phases that are equally important for our artist. The first, creation or design, consists of conceiving and planning the idea and its

viability. For this, it is necessary, from a certain introspection, to capture the motive and to choose and know well the physical space and the social context where it is to be done. This reflexive process requires great effort since the artistic part is usually contaminated by conditioning factors that are alien to the creation itself but are ultimately fundamental for the work to become a reality. For that reason, the mural artist needs certain qualities of a manager that are essential to obtain the objective, which is none other than to materialize the artist's idea. At the same time that multiple managements of all types are made, a multitude of schemes and drawings on paper or photographs are produced until a composition that is



Fig. 8 - Wall's preparation.

considered ideal is obtained and the promoter understands and accepts the proposal.

The second phase consists of material execution, moving the work to the walls. This requires several previous operations that José Ríos performs himself (fig. 8). In the next stage, the design must be transposed, scaling the drawings using a proportional grid to control the general lines of the work. This apparently simple task involves considerable difficulty because of the dimensions and changes in position. The last stage consists of the application of the final colour, a synthetic enamel that is applied from the highest to the lowest part. The difficulty of the movements means that the work must be finished in each position.





### Effects

José Ríos misses the spontaneity and speed of graffiti, but he understands that it is a different creative world from mural painting, as different is its relationship with architecture, which both need as support. Although mural work may necessarily be less aggressive or more condescending, at least in form and technique, it has a deeper critical message against some of the most negative effects of architecture itself. Both murals and graffiti share formats, such as their ephemeral character, as the materials and exposure to atmospheric agents respect neither. Although the restoration of graffiti is not considered, some murals are restored, as has happened to our artist.

The Malaga municipality of Estepona, which has most of the work from José Ríos, has become a tourist attraction thanks to the commitment of its public administrators. Today, it is a national and international reference for urban art, making the city more interesting and attractive for its residents and visitors, and turning public spaces into open-air museums. Ríos is proud of the results of his artistic work because several parallel objectives have been achieved through this cultural work, such as the urban reintegration of the most disadvantaged architectural neighbourhoods, the increase of the neighbourhood's value and the self-esteem of its citizens, who perceive it differently, and consider it more habitable from the perspective of public space. All this has led to the inclusion of the murals in a tourist circuit, with clear cultural and economic benefits for the city.

### Some works

#### *Día de pesca (Fishing day) - 2014*

This work occupies the southern facades of five parallel buildings (fig. 10) located along Isabel Simón Street in Estepona. At almost 1000 m<sup>2</sup>, it may be the largest mural in Spain made by a single artist. Its magnitude and depth make its vision change according to the position of the observer.

Fig. 9 - Fishing day (Día de pesca). Before.

Fig. 10 - Fishing day (Día de pesca). After.





The whole composes a maritime landscape of great dynamism, which commemorates the fishing origin of the town; by portraying one of its neighbours, it manages to increase social recognition. An important factor of this mural is to scale the objects according to the depth of the view so that they are always coherent for the observer.

*Regando el jardín (Watering the garden) - 2014*

This mural (fig. 12) occupies the north facade of the building located in the Andalusia Avenue of Estepona. It is a lateral facade to an old residual space recovered as public space with a solitary tree nearby. This insubstantial scene allows José Ríos, with the creation of a simple trompe l'oeil, to transform the scales and, with the image of a giant girl, to provoke an effect of sympathy between the building and the tree, which is now much closer to the observer. A delicacy of the artist, the play of lights and shadows, allows the creation of a sunny effect in a facade condemned to be devoid of it.

*Podando la Buganvilla (Pruning the bougainvillea) - 2015*

This mural (fig. 14) occupies an interior facade of the building located in Calle Sierra de Cazorta in Estepona. It is a smooth wall of exposed concrete without windows that looks out onto an open, but not public, space. The minimalism of the architectural idea is respected in the intervention, which is a trompe l'oeil of natural elements that are attached to and separated from the building. The creation makes it clear that the wall prevails over the mural. Thus, what could have been interpreted as an aggression ends up being a harmonious dialogue with the architecture itself and an elegant way of revitalizing the cold dihedral space.

*Volando cometas (Flying kites) - 2016*

This mural was made in the Paseo de Almería (fig. 16), the main artery of the city, where urban contradictions gave rise to large, bare, highly visible

Fig. 11 - Watering the garden (Regando el jardín). Before.

Fig. 12 - Watering the garden (Regando el jardín). After.



party walls. In this work, Ríos took advantage of an architectural residue to generate new forms inserted in the architecture as a useful element to model the absent volumes of the subtracted landscape, creating so a view of his own. The perspective of the cantilevers and the kites flying over the blue sky in surrealistic tints efficiently break with the sordidness of the dividing wall, partially rescuing the existing building.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

##### *Mural painting and architecture according to José Ríos*

Since time immemorial, architecture has shared its most cultural response with painting installed on its walls in a harmonious symbiosis of solutions, meaning and effects, which links the Temple of Luxor with the Sistine Chapel. Since the International Style in the 20th century, architecture has renounced all added "ornamentation". The idea, the symbol, the aesthetic value of architecture, is now based on the composition of forms, volumes and spaces, lights and shadows, materials and textures. The old dialogue between mural painting and architecture, supported by a certain shared plastic from a common conception of design with rare exceptions, such as the Mexican Muralists, is non-existent today. It could be said, in this new consciousness of uniqueness that is dominated by three-dimensionality, even grotesque, that any intervention on its surfaces would only contribute to hiding or "falsifying" the architecture itself.

José Ríos, against the tide, intervenes in the made architecture, which is of questionable value but consolidated. He does not accompany it from the beginning; in fact, he does not know or contact the authors of the project. In his concept of mural painting, the term mural intervenes as a physical necessity, an essential support that architecture offers him to make his work. Painting, apparently, is a supplement more than a complement for it.

Fig. 13 - Pruning the bougainvillea (Podando la buganvilla). Before.

Fig. 14 - Pruning the bougainvillea (Podando la buganvilla). After.





Fig. 15 - Flying kites (Volando cometas). Before.



Fig. 16 - Flying kites (Volando cometas). After.

<http://disegnarecon.univaq.it>

However, it is not just that. The buildings on which he intervenes are very concrete, and their qualities offer him the excuse to develop his art on them but also thanks to them. The divorce between architecture and mural painting does not disappear; there is no recovery of the lost relationship, but it is more bearable after the interventions of this artist, who is engaged in a dialogue from another era.

#### *Architecture as inspiration and as support*

Our cities and, particularly, our coasts were the object of wild and centralized urbanism during the last years of the Franco's dictatorship, which had some continuation in the hands of the municipalities in the new democracy. This urban "development", very little controlled, was a source of income and of corruption. If we add to this the great crisis in the construction sector in the first decade of the 21st century, known in Spain as "burbuja inmobiliaria" (the real estate bubble), we find catastrophic effects for our building and landscape heritage (not to mention the social issue). The result of this was many contradictions in the urban fabric in the form of "unfortunate" architectural interventions, incompatible typologies, large dividing walls, abandoned works or residual public spaces. It is in this context that the main interventions of José Ríos (Jaén, Almería, Estepona) take place in his capacity as a muralist, but also as a large-format sculptor. The place chosen as well as the background of his works, which are not at all conflicting in their subject matter, seems to respond more than to an attitude of criticism, complaint or claim, to the question, What can I do to change it, to improve it? It is precisely in this positive disposition, in contrast to the original situation, that we can find the subtle and gentle challenge of the undoubtedly disturbing context, from which the work of José Ríos wants to separate itself, hiding reality behind an illusory and ephemeral *trompe l'oeil*, but without being able to deny it. It is not possible to ignore reality, nor is it in our hands to re-

deem it from its errors; however, one can exempt it, even temporarily, as with a carnival costume.

#### *The upgrade of public space as a goal*

Architecture is a determining factor in terms of need or physical support, but it intervenes in a relatively contradictory way in the formulation of José Ríos' proposals. It is the public space that surrounds him that interests him most and provides him with the argument for his intervention. The murals do not modify the architecture, nor do they pretend to do so, even though they use it and, perceptively at least, manage to improve it through the plastic, friendly cancellation of some of its worst effects. What they manage to do is to change the reading of the public space they look at and from which they contemplate themselves, and which the paintings change, in some cases even radically, in their qualification. Paradoxically, these mural paintings, on walls, help to demolish them in the purest Pink Floyd style and to expand the public space constrained by them. We are able to see the marine horizon that architecture does not let us appreciate, while we become aware that there is a (bad) architecture that hides a marina landscape from us.

There is a before and an after, surely temporary, given the characteristics of its murals, which were painted at a latitude and in a climate not very conducive to their conservation. However, this author, who comes from graffiti and anonymous street art and who lacks the exacerbated ego of so many ordinary artists, does not seem to be concerned about its durability beyond the loss of the impact that his work may have had socially. The neighbours, in some cases from the peripheral suburbs, are delighted with the prominence that their neighbourhood has acquired thanks to the murals, which are now included in a specific tour organised by the municipality—an institution that, in view of its success, finds more attraction in these previously dubious interventions that it now promotes itself.

## REFERENCES

- Alinovi, F. (1984). *Arte di frontiera: New York graffiti*. Mazzotta.
- Avenidaño, A. (2017). Integración del arte mural en la arquitectura residencial de Ricardo Carbonell. *Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, (150), 91-117.
- Blanco, J. M. (2002). A flor de muro. El graffiti como comunicación alternativa. *Congreso Iberoamericano de Comunicación Alternativa* CICA 2002
- Canales Hidalgo, JA. (2006). *Pintura mural y publicidad exterior. De la función estética a la dimensión pública* [Tesis doctoral no publicada]. Universitat Politècnica de València
- Doerner, M. (1984). *The materials of the artist and their use in painting, with notes on the techniques of the old masters*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Manzoni, María & Fernández, Bettina & Liendo, Eugenia. (2019). El Graffiti ¿transformador urbano?. *RELACult - Revista Latino-Americana de Estudos em Cultura e Sociedade*.
- Martínez García-Otero, S. P. (2001). Agentes de deterioro y alteraciones de las pinturas murales "in situ". *PH: Boletín del Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico*, 9 (34), 201-205.
- Martínez, H. A., & Barba, J. J. (2013). El graffiti en educación de calle para el fomento de la autoestima, las relaciones sociales y la promoción social: el caso de Espacio Mestizo. *Revista electrónica interuniversitaria de formación del profesorado*, 16(3), 49-60.
- Mezzanato, G. (2018). *Street art da museo: il caso di Bologna, La mostra "Street art-Banksy & Co. L'arte allo stato urbano"* (Bachelor's thesis), Università Ca'Foscari Venezia.
- Newall S. (2015) "Una breve historia de Graffiti, reseña televisiva: Wot, no Banksy? Esto fue refrescante fuera de la pared" <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/reviews/a-brief-history-of-graffiti-tv-review-wot-no-banksy-this-as-refreshingly-off-the-wall-10473582.html>
- Randrup, M., & Ferraresi, F. (2009). *El graffiti tiene la palabra* (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Nacional de La Plata).
- Ríos Garza, C. La Ciudad Universitaria y el movimiento de integración plástica. *Bitácora arquitectural*, (21). <http://www.revistas.unam.mx/index.php/bitacora/article/view/25208>
- Rivera Blanco, J., & Pérez Arroyo, S. (2000). *Carta de Cracovia 2000. Principios para la conservación y restauración del patrimonio construido*. Instituto Español de Arquitectura (Universidad de Valladolid).
- Webs of José Ríos:
- José Ríos en Wikipedia*  
[https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos%C3%A9\\_Fern%C3%A1ndez\\_R%C3%ADos](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos%C3%A9_Fern%C3%A1ndez_R%C3%ADos)
- Reflejos del Jardín*  
<https://www.orchidariumestepona.com/el-ayuntamiento-realiza-un-conjunto-de-murales-de-mas-de-4-200-metros-cuadrados-junto-al-parque-botanico-orquidario-de-estepona/>
- Día de Pesca*  
<https://google.com/maps/@41.700000,-8.500000,15z>
- Regando el Jardín*  
<https://google.com/maps/@41.700000,-8.500000,15z>
- Podando la Bugambilla*  
<https://google.com/maps/@41.700000,-8.500000,15z>