Towards the scholarly documentation of street art

Martin de la Iglesia
Universität Heidelberg - Institut für Europäische Kunstgeschichte
martin.delaiglesia@gmail.com

Abstract

It is generally acknowledged that street art is a particularly ephemeral art. For instance, graffiti are usually actively removed, thus existing for sometimes only a few days. Otherwise, they deteriorate gradually due to the effects of the weather, or are eventually 'crossed' by other graffiti, so that they are visible for a few years at best. Therefore, the documentation of street art should be of paramount importance to researchers. In fact, a lot of photography is being carried out ostensibly to document street art, for both image databases on the Internet as well as printed books and magazines. However, for the most part, this kind of street art photography is not done by (or for) scholars but rather by (and for) the general public. In any case, this practice usually does not fulfill even the lowest scholarly standards of documentation. One can be considered lucky to find any metadata for such pictures – for example, the artist's name, an approximate location (usually on a city or district level), or the date on which the picture was taken, if at all. Furthermore, the selection of photographed works is highly biased due to the personal tastes of the photographers or the accessibility of the work. In order for street art documentation to be useful for research, providing further data is necessary, such as a more precise location, references to other instances of the same work, and the dimensions of the work. In this article, the current inadequate state of documentation in street art research is surveyed, and a model for the online documentation of stencil graffiti is presented that demonstrates the feasibility of some of these requirements.

Keywords: Disciplinarity, Documentation, Metadata, Object-based research, Referencing; Standardization.

1. Where is the art in street art studies?

The last few years have seen a considerable increase in scholarly publication activity related to street art and graffiti – a trend exemplified by the foundation of this very journal.[1] If, however, one looks at Street Art Studies as a possible scholarly field or discipline of its own, it remains elusive, or at least heterogeneous. For reasons that will become clear later in this article, one question in this context is of particular relevance: can Street Art Studies be counted among the object-based Humanities, such as Art History and Archaeology (Krause and Reiche, 2013)?

The vast majority of scholarly texts on graffiti and street art seem to be concerned with people rather than objects. Gregory Snyder's (2009: 9-10) aim, for instance, was to "place people before theory" and to "distinguish between the graffiti pieces and the people who create them." Likewise, Julia Reinecke (2012: 177-181) analyses street art as a "field" in Pierre Bourdieu's sense, and portrays its "actors." Even art historian Anna Wacławek (2011: 159) has reservations against works of graffiti and street art as objects, and depreciates them when she says, "because the objects that typify these art practices are not singular and because they are 'free', they also fall within the realm of popular art and street culture." This leads Wacławek to take a "visual culture studies" approach that is "concerned with contemporary, everyday experiences of visual consumption." The dominant methods and approaches in Street Art Studies seem to stem from fields such as anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and ethnography, all of which tend to place people before objects, or, in our case, street artists before street art.

And yet, most scholarly authors use the term 'street art' in their publication titles, and not 'street artists'. Street artists are defined first and foremost by the works they have created, not so much by the process of creating them: even though the thrill of working illegally at the risk of get-

ting caught and facing legal consequences is an appeal for many artists (see Snyder, 2009: 9), all authors agree that the main purpose of street art is to communicate – be it communication within the graffiti community, territorial markings, or the conveyance of socio-political messages to the general public (Cowick, 2015). Despite the ephemerality of their artworks, it is through these artworks (or their photographic reproductions) long after their creation, rather than through the act of creation, that street artists communicate (Brown, 2015). This justifies paying closer attention to the works created by street artists, even within individual studies that focus on the artists themselves.

2. Treatment of artworks in object-based scholarly texts

If we assume, then, that Street Art Studies is an object-based scholarly discipline, how should objects in an object-based discipline ideally be dealt with? Let us consider a randomly selected example from an article in a recent issue of *Art History* (O'Neill, 2015: 115), a major journal in the eponymous field. The text refers to a painting reproduced as Plate 5 in that article:

The painting depicts the liberation of a male figure imprisoned alongside a knight and a priest [...]. The figure of Freedom in that painting [...] bursts into the cell, lit from behind by dazzling sunlight. The upwards thrust of the canvas, in concert with the limited span of the angel's iridescent wings, conveys the claustrophobia of the prison cell while simultaneously revealing the awesome power of the liberator.

The caption of plate 5 reads:

"Plate 5. Walter Crane, Freedom, 1885. Oil on canvas,182 × 122 cm. Private Collection. Photo: Sotheby's Picture Library."

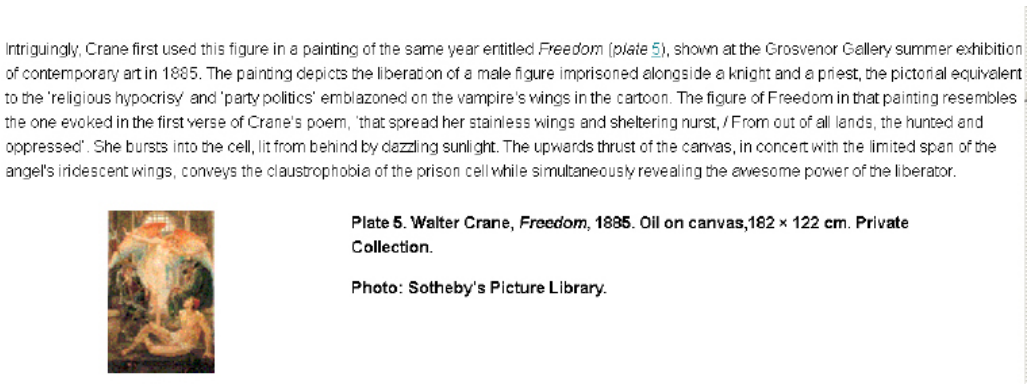

Intriguingly, Crane first used this figure in a painting of the same year entitled *Freedom* (*plate* 5), shown at the Grosvenor Gallery summer exhibition of contemporary art in 1885. The painting depicts the liberation of a male figure imprisoned alongside a knight and a priest, the pictorial equivalent to the 'religious hypocrisy' and 'party politics' emblazoned on the vampire's wings in the cartoon. The figure of Freedom in that painting resembles the one evoked in the first verse of Crane's poem, 'that spread her stainless wings and sheltering nurst, / From out of all lands, the hunted and oppressed'. She bursts into the cell, lit from behind by dazzling sunlight. The upwards thrust of the canvas, in concert with the limited span of the angel's iridescent wings, conveys the claustrophobia of the prison cell while simultaneously revealing the awesome power of the liberator.

Figure 1. Screenshot from the online version of O'Neill (2015)

No less than eight pieces of information about this artwork, or metadata, are provided here: artist, title, year of creation, technique or material, dimensions, location, a brief description of the content and composition, and, last but not least, a photographic reproduction (plus photography credit). What may appear to be an abundancy of metadata is in fact necessary information if we consider its purpose. Intuitively, four different purposes of artwork metadata come to mind:

a. to help the reader get a better idea of what the work looks like;
b. to help the reader physically locate the work;
c. to distinguish it from other similar works;
d. to act as a substitute for lost works (Prochno, 1999: 92).

The photographic reproduction is the most important of these pieces of metadata, but on its own its explanatory power is limited, as it is hard to tell from a photograph how large the artwork is, with which technique it was produced, where it is located, etc. Therefore, it is standard practice in traditional object-based disciplines such as art history to provide a set of textual metadata in addition to a pictorial representation when discussing an artwork.

3. Treatment of artworks in scholarly texts on street art

In contrast, Street Art Studies deal with their objects in quite a different way. Let us consider two examples from recent scholarly works that are indicative of Street Art Studies as a whole. Julia Reinecke's book "Street-Art. Eine Subkultur zwischen Kunst und Kommerz" ("street art, a subculture between art and commerce") first came out in 2007 and was the first scholarly German-language monograph on street art. The following refers to its second edition (2012). Page 51 is typical of how Reinecke writes about works of street art and of how she relates images to words: In a chapter on Blek Le Rat, three figures are included, with the following captions:

Abbildung [i.e. figure] 7: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Old Irish Man Screaming. Paris 1983
Abbildung 8: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Tom Waits. Paris 1984
Abbildung 9: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Old Irish Man. Paris 1983

Nachdem Blek Le Rat in den letzten Jahren mit den Ratten, Panzern, Portraits und anderen Schablonen, die in unterschiedlichen Städten auftauchten, bereits die Neugierde der französischen Bevölkerung geweckt hatte, gelang Prou mit dem riesigen Schablonenbild des Mannes der Durchbruch. Das *Pochoir* war im Gespräch: Der alte nordirische Mann kursierte unter den Namen Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin und schlicht »der Alte«. Mit seiner sich stetig perfektionierenden Technik stellte Prou daraufhin Tom Waits, einen kleinen Jungen in kurzer Hose, Andy Warhol, Marcel Dessault, eine Frau mit Kind, einen russischen Soldaten, Mitterand, Joseph Beuys, Christus und etwa vierzig andere Gestalten her.

Abbildung 7: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Old Irish Man Screaming. Paris 1983
Abbildung 8: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Tom Waits. Paris 1984
Abbildung 9: Blek Le Rat Pochoir: Old Irish Man. Paris 1983

Figure 2. Part of page 51 from Reinecke (2012)

The corresponding text passage on the same page reads:

After Blek Le Rat piqued the curiosity of the French public with rats, tanks, portraits and other stencils which appeared in various cities, [Xavier] Prou [a.k.a. Blek Le Rat] made his breakthrough with the huge stencil image of a man. The pochoir became talk of the town: the old Northern Irish man went by the names of Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin and simply 'the old guy'. With his steadily improving technique, Prou went on to produce Tom Waits, a little boy in short trousers, Andy Warhol, Marcel Dessault [sic; i.e. Dassault], a woman with child, a Russian soldier, Mitterand, Joseph Beuys, Christ, and approximately forty more figures (my translation).

Both Reinecke's captions and the text passage referring

to the images are markedly different from those in Morna O'Neill's art historical article on Walter Crane. In Reinecke's captions, the artist's name, a title (although the source of the title is unclear), only a vague location, and a year (the year of production or the year in which the photograph was taken?) are given. In comparison to O'Neill's article, the technique and the dimensions are missing. While it can be easily and safely assumed that the pictures were made using spray paint and stencils, we cannot tell from the photographs how large they are. Reinecke says the "Old Irish Man" is "huge" ("riesig"), but what does this mean precisely? Huge for a man (i.e., more than life size) or huge for a regular stencil graffiti piece, which could mean as little as 100 × 50 cm? On the same page, Reinecke says Blek Le Rat created his first life-sized stencil portrait of a man in 1984, but it is unclear whether she means "Old Irish Man" or another piece. Indicating the height and width of an artwork, even if given only roughly or estimated, is crucial when this cannot be inferred from the photograph provided. For instance, knowing the dimensions is important for reception research, for example, when investigating how the relation between the size of painted figures and the size of beholders influences their perception. With other works of street art, measurements can be important because different sizes give clues about different techniques that might have been used, for example, stencils for intricate details in small works, or paint rollers for large ones.

The quoted text passage is also different from O'Neill's in that Reinecke does not actually describe the pictured artworks, except for the vague statement about the size of "Old Irish Man" and brief remarks about its reception. On the other hand, Reinecke lists many more works in this text passage without picturing them. Clearly, this low level of detail is not enough to fulfill the purposes of artwork metadata outlined in section 2 above:

a. due to the lack of measurements and the small size of the photographic reproduction, the reader does not get a good idea of what the work looks like in real life.
b. The given location, "Paris", is not precise enough to let the reader find the work. The exact location of an artwork is important though, for several reasons. First of all, to see the original work is still the preferred way for any researcher (except for those following 'big data' or statistical approaches) to start his or her investigation. Photographs and textual data cannot replace the actual encounter with the original work. Street addresses or geographic coordinates allow researchers other than the one who undertook the documentation to find the artwork and see it with their own eyes, unless it has been removed by the time they get there. Even if all that is left is an empty wall, being at the actual place where the artwork once has been provides insights: Is this wall in a lively street or on a deserted site? Did many people get to see the artwork? Did the artist have to hurry when he painted it? Are there other street art pieces, or other objects, near the artwork that it perhaps reacted to? These are all questions usually not answered by the photographs used to document the artworks, so the indication of their exact location is essential.
c. The reader will not be able to distinguish this work from similar ones: Reinecke pictures two variants of "Old Irish Man", but does not explain which of the varying details (speech bubble, signature, placement of bottle) constitute the variant, and whether there are more variants. Even if there were no variants, it may be important to determine the exact instance of a stencil graffiti piece due to its site specificity (Riggle, 2010; Wacławek, 2011: 133-139; 178; Brown, 2015).
d. Because of the lack of measurements, the small size of the reproduced photograph in combination with the lack of a verbal description, and the general scarcity of metadata, Reinecke's information on the "Old Irish Man" would be a poor substitute for the actual work.

How problematic Reinecke's treatment of artworks can be becomes obvious later in her book when she discusses Banksy and his stencil graffiti pieces on the West Bank wall (Reinecke, 2012: 66-67). She speaks of nine different works, pictures two of them and briefly describes two works in the text. One of them is described like this: "one motif shows an opening through which blue sky is shining as if it came from the back of the wall. Next to it there is a stencil-sprayed boy holding a brush and paint bucket, as if he had painted the hole" (my translation). The problem here is that it is unclear which of Banksy's West Bank wall pieces Reinecke is referring to. One of the two pictured works shows a painted hole in the wall, but there are two children below it, not one next to it, and in the picture within the hole we see more sand and palm trees than blue sky. The second work described by Reinecke here is, "a white ladder leading up to the edge of the wall. At the bottom of the wall, Banksy painted the boy again" (my translation). In fact, there seem to be three of Banksy's West Bank works that depict similar-

looking boys. The figures of the children in these three works are made from apparently only two different stencils. One of these pictures is probably the one meant by Reinecke, as it contains blue sky and a child, but the child is not the same as in the ladder piece, and the objects in its hand are more likely a spade and sand bucket (Wacławek, 2011: 147) in order to invoke a beach scene, rather than a brush and paint bucket.[2] It looks as if Reinecke either mixed up several of the West Bank pieces, or simply did not pay close attention to their details; at any rate it betrays a superficial treatment of the artworks.

As a second example, let us consider Anna Wacławek's book "Graffiti and Street Art" (2011), the first street art monograph written by an art historian. A typical caption in this book looks like this:

[Fig.] 29 (above) Roadsworth, Male Plug, Baie-Saint-Paul, Canada, 2007. A road is an integral constituent in the organization of a city but one that is typically devoid of artistic expression. Roadsworth seamlessly works his stencils into existing road markings to intervene within the regimented urban vocabulary and transform utilitarian symbols into new avenues of meaning (Wacławek 2011: 35; bold and italics by A. W.).

In other captions, a title is often missing, as is the location

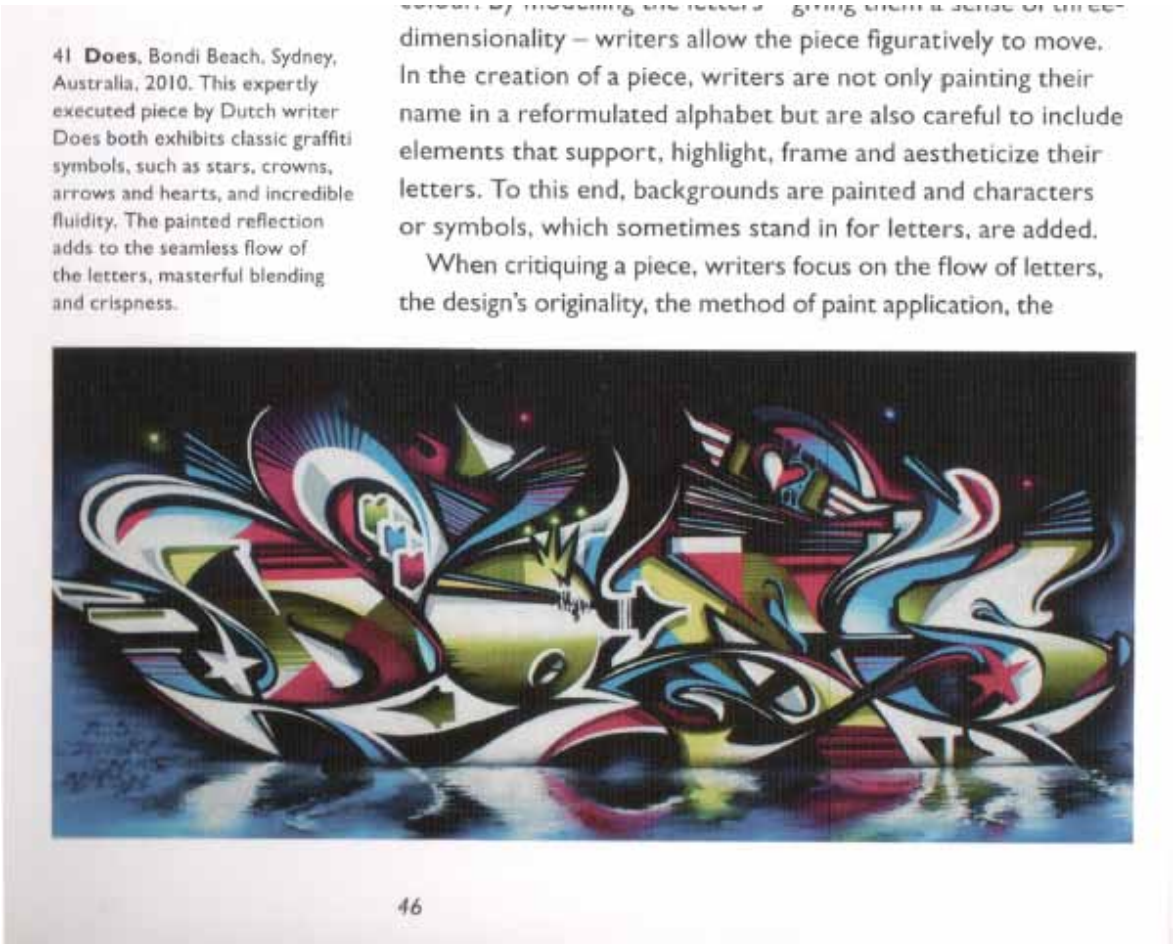
Figure 3. Part of page 35 from Wacławek (2011)

and sometimes the year. The text passage referring to this figure reads:

Working with a very different spatial and visual aesthetic [than Banksy], in 2001 Roadsworth initiated a series of stencilled images on the roads of Montreal. The integration of his paintings with official city infrastructure offers a unique opportunity for a dialogue between citizens and the structure of the city. By painting on roads, the artist not only appropriates a non-traditional surface for art diffusion, but also intervenes in a highly structured, functional and systematized formal vocabulary [29] (Wacławek, 2011: 34; plate number in square brackets by A. W.).

The deficiencies in Wacławek's metadata are largely the same as in Reinecke's book – lack of dimensions, imprecise location, unclear source of title and year – and the corresponding text passage is similar in that it does not refer to the pictured work itself, but rather to a series of works that the pictured work is part of. However, whether the pictured "Male Plug" is really part of the series mentioned in the text is unclear: the text passage reads as if Roadsworth's series was confined to Montreal, but the location of "Male Plug" is given as Baie-Saint-Paul, which is far away from Montreal.

In contrast to Reinecke and most other street art authors, Wacławek offers actual formal descriptions of graffiti pieces, albeit few and brief, such as in this caption:
[Fig.] 41 Does, Bondi Beach, Sydney, Australia, 2010. This expertly executed piece by Dutch writer Does both exhibits classic graffiti symbols, such as stars, crowns, arrows and hearts, and incredible fluidity. The painted reflection adds to the seamless flow of the letters, masterful blending and crispness (Wacławek, 2011: 46; bold by A. W.).


41 **Does**, Bondi Beach, Sydney, Australia, 2010. This expertly executed piece by Dutch writer Does both exhibits classic graffiti symbols, such as stars, crowns, arrows and hearts, and incredible fluidity. The painted reflection adds to the seamless flow of the letters, masterful blending and crispness.

dimensionality – writers allow the piece figuratively to move. In the creation of a piece, writers are not only painting their name in a reformulated alphabet but are also careful to include elements that support, highlight, frame and aestheticize their letters. To this end, backgrounds are painted and characters or symbols, which sometimes stand in for letters, are added.

When critiquing a piece, writers focus on the flow of letters, the design's originality, the method of paint application, the

46

Figure 4. Part of page 46 from Wacławek (2011)

On the other hand, Wacławek (as well as Reinecke) is guilty of sometimes writing about artworks without picturing them (e.g. p. 47), and picturing artworks without writing about them (e.g. p. 97) – a mistake most first-year students of art history are taught to avoid (Prochno 1999: 102-109).

This superficial treatment of artworks in Street Art Studies may be due to two reasons: the scholars' attitude, and the lack of data. As outlined in section 1 above, the problem with the attitude of the majority of street art scholars is that they see street art not primarily as an art form, but as a movement, a subculture, or a group of people. This leads them to neglect the analysis of artworks as a research method, even though it is the artworks themselves, more often than not, which form the base of their arguments. Julia Reinecke's book, for instance, makes a point of how street art can be commercialized, and she mentions Mysterious Al's backpack designs for Eastpak and advertisement design for Carhartt as evidence (Reinecke, 2012: 114) without giving any information about them, let alone trying to convey what they look like.

The second reason for not providing information on works of street art is that this kind of information is not as easy to look up as, for example, information on oil paintings by famous artists such as Walter Crane. When art historians need to find out the measurements of a painting, even if they stand before it in a gallery, they hardly ever use a ruler. Instead, this, and many other pieces of information, is usually looked up in previous publications on that work, including but not limited to catalogues raisonnés and collection inventories. For street art, few resources containing such data exist. Unfortunately, not many street art scholars appear to make the effort to carry out the fundamental research involved in documenting artworks and establishing their basic metadata. Furthermore, notions of what it means to document street art and how to properly do it vary from scholar to scholar.

4. Documenting street art

In 2008, Rachel Masilamani published an article on "Documenting Illegal Art", more precisely "New York City's 1970s and 1980s Graffiti Art Movement," in which she states:

The rising numbers of image-laden graffiti art books published in the past decade indicate that communities outside of traditional repositories recognize the need to document this elusive yet universal form [i.e. graffiti]. It is incumbent upon archivists and curators to recognize the need to acquire and preserve artifacts and records related to this movement and develop an awareness of its history and major players (Masilamani, 2008: 4).

In other words, the photographic documentation of graffiti is seemingly appearing by itself, without the need for professional archivists to do anything. What is left for archivists to do is to collect items related to graffiti culture, such as black books and records of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Later in the article, Masilamani (2008: 12) concedes to scholars and archivists the task of collaboratively gathering and editing metadata, including metadata for graffiti photographs: "A collaborative software-supported record for a photograph of a throw-up may include information about the date, writer, photographer, donor, location, color, style, etc., without being physically included with any particular collection […]." However, Masilamani does not propose a standard metadata set for such records.

In a book chapter from 2015, Brian Brown also embraces photography as a means of documentation and preservation. According to Brown, though, it is the street artists themselves who disseminate their work via digital photographs on the Internet: "The archival qualities of the online environment compensate for the inherent ephemerality of the physical works." Consequently,

the object that more faithfully represents the intentions and/or vision of the artist is not the physical work itself, removed from its original context or extracted from the broader urban canvas that is elemental to its composition, but the digital representation thereof that captures this contextual urban canvas and the intentions of the artist more faithfully than the tattered remnants housed in a gallery (Brown, 2015: 283).

This view is problematic: not only does the artwork undergo a fundamental transformation when digitized – the original (e.g. spray-painted) artwork and the digital photography are two different kinds of object – but also the photograph made by an artist (or passerby) is quite different from a photograph made by a scholar with the aim to document a work of art, including the metadata and accompanying text.

Similarly, Carmen Cowick (2015) suggested that,

"the easiest way to address the ephemeral nature [of street art] is regular photography of neighborhoods and areas known for their street art. This does not need to be done solely by the archivist or librarian; it can be a crowdsourcing effort involving all interested parties." Crowdsourcing, however, is unlikely to yield metadata in sufficient quality, depth, and extent. This is evident in online database efforts such as Google's recently launched Street Art Project (https://streetart.withgoogle.com; see also Riefe, 2015). Different institutions have contributed data to this resource, which makes it very heterogeneous – some records provide measurements, some do not, for instance - and the featured artworks are selected by varying and often arbitrary criteria of relevance, rather than transparent scholarly standards. Instead, a scholarly information resource should strive for complete coverage, so that users know what they can expect to find. This coverage needs to be explicitly defined and could encompass the oeuvre of a single artist like a catalogue raisonné, or all works within a defined spatial area, not unlike a museum catalogue. Online resources similar to Google Street Art Project spring up (and perish) continuously, e.g. Global Street Art (http://globalstreetart.com) from the UK, or Streetart Finder (http://www.streetartfinder.de) from Germany. Another interesting website is Graffiti Archaeology (http://grafarc.org) from the US, which provides detailed temporal data, but (deliberately – see Curtis, 2011) lacks any spatial data. These Internet resources all suffer from the same problems, due to their largely crowdsourced content: fragmentary or at least heterogeneous metadata, and erratic or arbitrary coverage.

Figure 5. Screenshot of a record view in Google Street Art Project. Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google Inc., used with permission

5. Creating a street art metadata resource

For the reasons outlined above in section 4, I maintain that it is up to the researcher to gather metadata (this will usually include taking photographs) for works of street art, which of course does not preclude the sharing and re-use of such data. For measuring graffiti pieces, a straightforward methodology has already been suggested by David Novak (2014). This and other aspects of metadata creation need to be (further) discussed within Street Art Studies in order to establish standard methodologies and metadata sets, which can serve as points of orientation for scholars producing metadata and authors referring to artworks alike. Street art encompasses a wide variety of media, so it might make sense to approach

each medium separately, as there are different metadata requirements for each, for example, graffiti pieces, three-dimensional installations, or mass-produced stickers, etc.

As proof of concept, I have created the online resource "Schablonengraffiti in Freiburg-Mittelwiehre" (http://graffiti.freiburg.bplaced.net/, in German). The scope of this street art data collection is limited to the medium of stencil graffiti, and confined to one particular city district of Freiburg, Germany. Under these typological and spatial criteria, it aims to be complete. Since its inception in 2007, the collection is continuously updated and contains more than 200 records to date. Each record consists of two photographs – one close-up shot of the artwork and one wide shot that includes part of the surrounding location (each in two different resolutions) – and a set of metadata: location (street address), measurements (height by width, rounded to half centimetres), date on which the photograph was taken, and, if applicable, the date on which the work was found to be removed or destroyed, and finally references to other records with pieces likely made from the same stencil.[3] Part of this data set is also provided in the machine-readable RDFa format (Herman et al., 2013), in order to comply with Linked Open Data standards (Berners-Lee, 2009) so that others can aggregate and analyse the data across multiple sources.

Of course, it is unlikely that a street art researcher working on, for example, a particular street artist will find relevant data on the "Schablonengraffiti in Freiburg-Mittelwiehre" website. However, imagine all street art scholars putting together and making available, or at least contributing to, similar resources. Measured against the totality of street

Figure 6. Screenshot of "Schablonengraffiti in Freiburg-Mittelwiehre".

art worldwide, the coverage would still be incomplete – it always will be, given the continuing prosperity of street art production and the humble extent of Street Art Studies – but at least there would be some sound scholarly data that other researchers could rely on. In turn, the availability of data might inspire street art scholars to engage more closely with individual artworks, so that a culture of proper referencing of artworks may develop. For as long as we are imprecise about the artworks we are discussing, our research will be rightfully seen as lacking scholarly rigor.

References

Berners-Lee, T. (2009) *Linked Data.* [Online] Available at: http://www.w3.org/DesignIssues/LinkedData.html [Accessed: 30/11/2015].

Brown, B.A. (2015) *Digitized Street Art.* In: Marchese, F.T. (Ed.) Media Art and the Urban Environment. Engendering Public Engagement with Urban Ecology (Future City 5). Cham: Springer. 267-284.

Cowick, C. (2015) *Preserving Street Art: Uncovering the Challenges and Obstacles*. Art Documentation, 34(1): 29-44.

Curtis, C. (2011) Why Graffiti Archaeology doesn't have maps. Graffiti Archaeology News. [Online] Available at: http://grafarc.org/news/2011/12/why-graffiti-archaeology-doesnt-have-maps/ [Accessed 30/11/2015].

Herman, I., Adida, B., Sporny, M., Birbeck, M. (2013) RDFa 1.1 Primer. *Rich Structured Data Markup for Web Documents,* second ed. [Online] Available at: http://www.w3.org/TR/2013/NOTE-rdfa-primer-20130822/ [Accessed 30/11/2015].

Krause, C., Reiche, R. (2013) *Ein Bild sagt mehr als tausend Pixel? Über den Einsatz digitaler Methoden in den Bild- und Objektwissenschaften,* Kunstgeschichte. Open Peer Reviewed Journal. [Online] Available at: urn:nbn:de:bvb:355-kuge-354-6 [Accessed 30/11/2015].

Masilamani, R. (2008) *Documenting Illegal Art: Collaborative Software, Online Environments and New York City's 1970s and 1980s Graffiti Art Movement*. Art Documentation, 27(2): 4-14.

Novak, D. (2014) *Methodology for the Measurement of Graffiti Art Works: Focus on the Piece.* World Applied Sciences Journal, 32(1): 40-46.

O'Neill, M. (2015) *Cartoons for the Cause?* Walter Crane's The Anarchists of Chicago. Art History, 38(1): 106-137.

Prochno, R. (1999) Das Studium der Kunstgeschichte. Eine praxisbetonte Einführung. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

Reinecke, J. (2012) *Street-Art: Eine Subkultur zwischen Kunst und Kommerz*, second ed. Bielefeld: transcript [first published 2007].

Riefe, J. (2015) *Google Street Art Project: 'We are not the mural police, we are the mural conservancy.'* The Guardian, March 27, 2015. [Online] Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/mar/27/google-street-art-project-mural-conservancy [Accessed: 30/11/2015].

Riggle, N.A. (2010) *Street Art: The Transfiguration of the Commonplaces.* The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism. 68(3): 243-257.

Snyder, G.J. (2009) *Graffiti Lives: Beyond the Tag* in New York's Urban Underground. New York: New York University Press.

Wacławek, A. (2011) *Graffiti and Street Art.* London: Thames & Hudson.

Notes

1 - While many authors make a point of distinguishing street art from graffiti (see above all Riggle, 2010, but also Reinecke, 2012: 21-49, and Wacławek 2011: 29-30), I mostly use the terms interchangeably in this article.

2 - A photograph of this work can be seen at: http://www.theguardian.com/arts/pictures/image/0,8543,-10105256016,00.html.

3 - Some works of street art are unique and irreproducible, whereas others, such as most stencil graffiti, but also marker tags, are intended to be produced in multiple copies with little or no variation. For research, this information is important: if an artwork cannot be found anymore at the site where it was photographed, maybe there is another instance of the same motif at another location where it can still be seen. Furthermore, the spatial distribution of copies may give an idea about the 'territories' of artists, and about the people who might have seen the artwork.

Note: I acknowledge the financial support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg within the funding programme Open Access Publishing.