

Individual project proposal draft

“Birstreet Art Collection”

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Overview

- Bristol+Street Art+Archiving=Birstreet Art Collection
- Use Online platform

The concept of my curatorial project is 'Birstreet Art', an online archive collection focusing on Bristol, one of the most famous street art cities in the UK. My interest in this project is to challenge how street art, which has a strong association with the context of the city, can be archived in Bristol's ever-changing artworks and landscape. The project investigates the curatorial potential of transient, site-specific artworks such as street art being delivered to audiences online. There are ethical issues that could potentially subvert the concept of street art because of its digital curation. These and more will be explored in the expanded curation of street art in Bristol in the digital space.



Spybooth by Banksy. (2014). The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/aug/21/banksy-spy-booth-mural-feared-permanently-destroyed-cheltenham>.

Concept

- Digital curation with spatial awareness
- Combining photography and video: street art as performance
- Democratisation of art curation

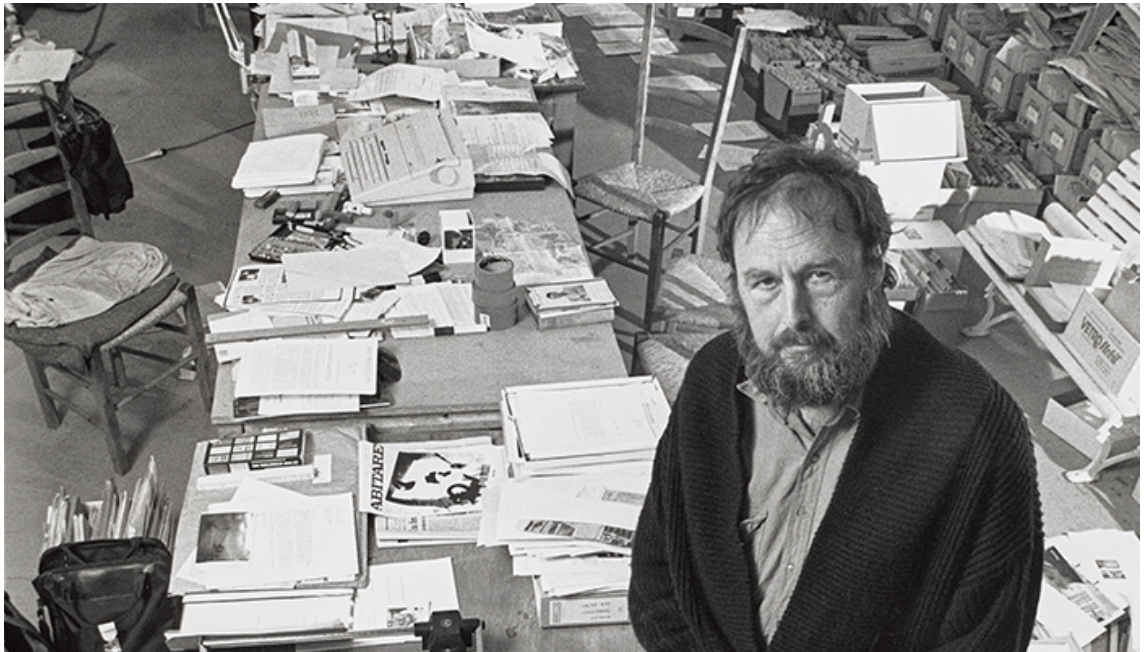
The format is a website-style archive site using an online platform. It combines flat and 3D maps to fit into an urban context, which is a key element in curating street art. The map allows users to pin the location of artworks within Bristol and upload photos and short videos at any time. These date- and time-independent videos and photos enable the capturing of changes in street art that cannot be complemented by temporary archival records. The multifaceted aspects of the work can be preserved from elements that blend into the urban context of street art, such as weather, light, deterioration and deliberate erasure. Uploading can be completed entirely within the website, without the use of special apps, allowing not only artists and curators, but also spectators and citizens to participate. By allowing people outside of institutions to curate openly, the site can further develop people's interest in street art in Bristol and their attachment to the work and the city.

Curatorial methodologies

The methodology of my project combines archival curatorial practice, image archiving and the collection of works online. Storing works on an online platform as an archive is part of a curatorial practice, allowing for the expansion of Bristol's urban culture and artists' practice, and inviting a non-limiting audience.

- **Archived curatorial practice: Harald Szeemann**
To begin with, I would like to refer to Harald Szeemann's archived curatorial practice. He used in his exhibitions a collection of his own ideas, including books, letters, interviews and notes called 'the Fabbrica Rosa-the pinkfactor', as well as photographs and artefacts documenting the exhibitions he curated. (Phillips at al., 2018) His curatorial process involved the multidimensional use of archives and the accumulation of ideas, expanding the diversity and scale of his curation. He went to meet artists from all over the world, conversing with

them, collecting texts and objects related to their practice, from which he ultimately rescued order and demonstrated his experience in organising the exhibition. (Leaver, 2019) The accumulation of such material provides a link to future projects and offers a clear process of destruction and reconstruction around the archive. This process of re-creation suggests that my project could be a source of material in future curation, as most of my projects can be found in real time, from vanished street art to the latest street art.



Harald Szeemann in the "Fabbrica Rosa," his office and archive in Maggia, Switzerland, ca. 1990s. The Getty Research Institute, Photo: Fredo Meyer-Henn, State Archive of Canton Bern.

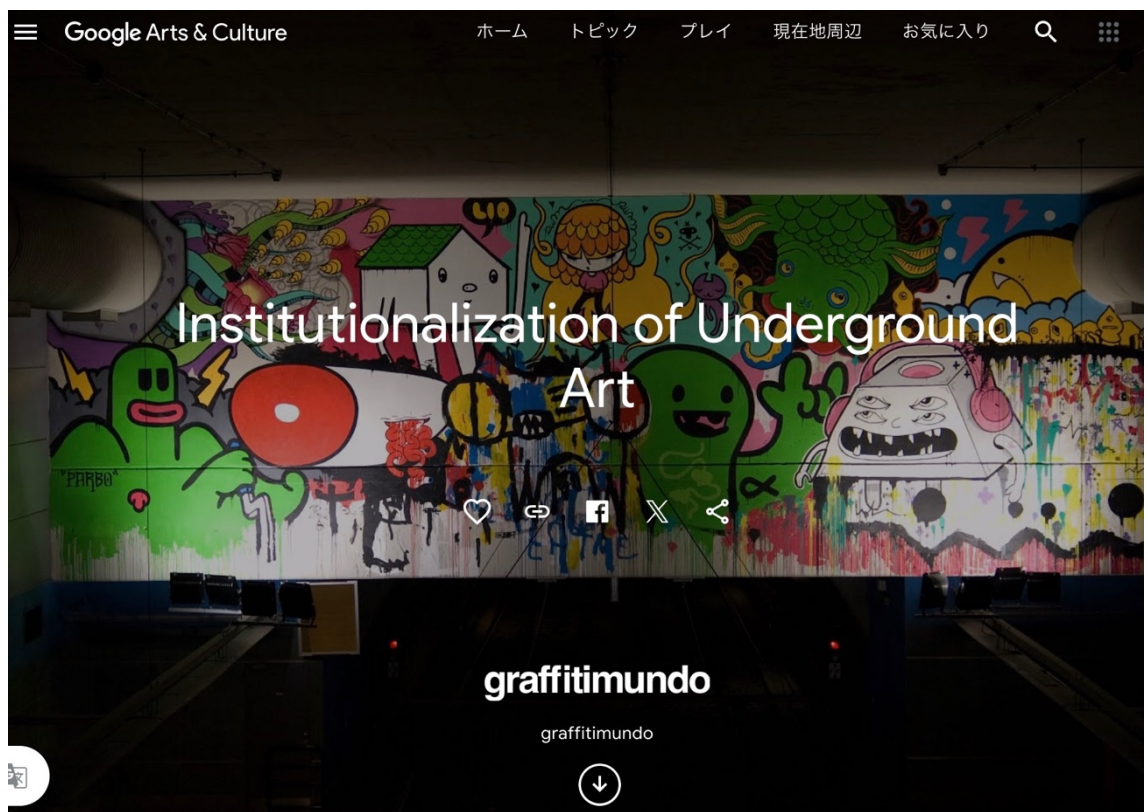
- **Image archives: Getty Research Institute**

At the Getty Research Institute, the two million photographs in the photographic archive provide complementary and original pictorial research for the study of art from antiquity to the present day. The strength of the archive lies in its photographic reproductions of Western art, architecture and decorative arts. Users can use these photographs to conduct a wide range of research, including the history of collecting, iconography, conservation, historiography and reproduction. In addition, the institution has separated the image archive from the direct management of the museum, which has led to changes not only in the subject matter of the photographs, but also in their function as an archive. A self-critical look at the organisation of the photo archive elevated the selected

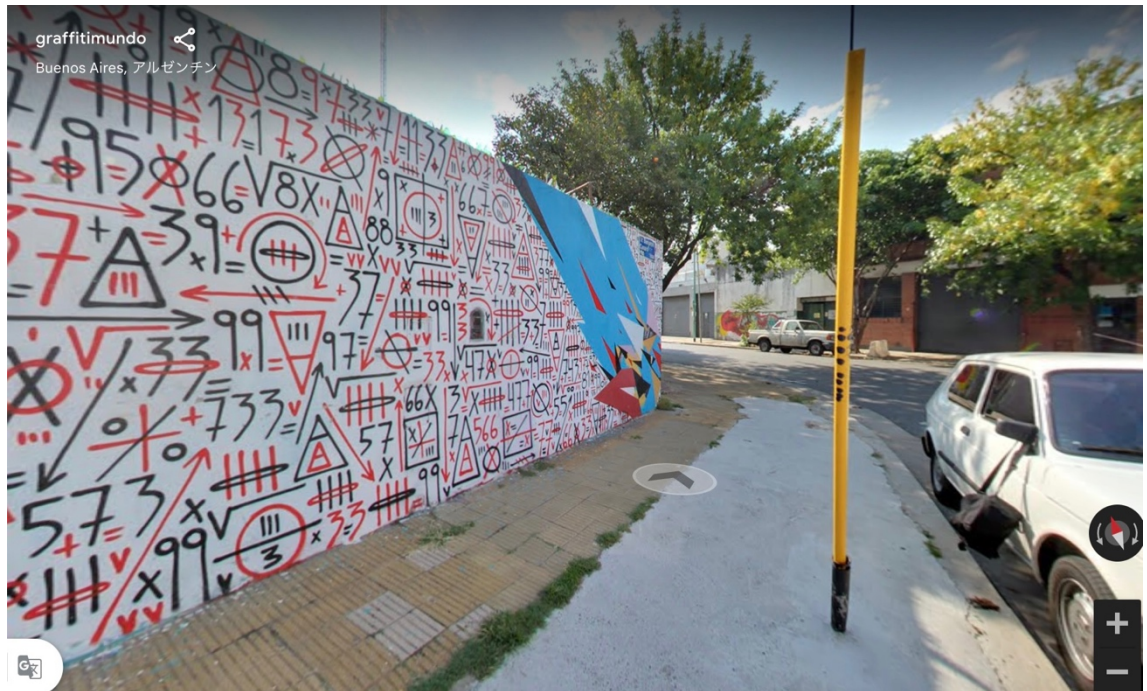
photographs to the realm of high art and successfully anchored the photographic medium in the museum context (Willumson, 1998). This accessibility to the archive from the outside and active innovation in the objects to be archived has led to an expansion of the context of contemporary art. Based on this, I think that to expand further and develop street art in the context of contemporary art, it is necessary to consider the hurdles to archiving and access to archives.

- **Online collection: Google Art Project – Street Art**

Google Cultural Institute has launched Street Art, an online repository of over 5,000 graffiti images from around the world, as part of the Google Art project. Google's Lucy Schwartz said that 'the temporary nature of street art means that large numbers of fans, meaning it is in danger of being culled and lost forever', wrote Google on its official blog (Beaumont-Thomas, 2014). Online collections using Street View and photographs of artworks combined with text convey the context well.



Screenshot of Google Arts & Culture website 1. (2024). Taken by author



Screenshot of Google Arts & Culture website 2. (2024). Taken by author



Screenshot of Google Arts & Culture website 3. (2024). Taken by author

The theme

- Curatorial mission statement

As curators we will be responsive, experimental, creative, open, inclusive and flexible in our approaches. We will view our role as mediator.

We will consistently aim to engage with new audiences and under-represented communities and cultures, with a focus on inclusivity. We aim to engage with audiences on both a local and a global scale.

We intend to pay specific attention to artwork that is multi-media and that exists both inside and outside of gallery spaces.

Our forms of communication will include online and physical spaces with a varied mixture of textual and non-textual outputs.

Referring to this statement, the project will revolve around a focus on inclusivity and considering one's role as a mediator. Therefore, the theme will be achieved by providing digital curation using an online platform accessible to all and a system where the audience can contribute to the curation by submitting photos.

- **Interactive form: Street Art Trail Walking**

In addition to the online website, I will offer Street Art Trail Walking, a tour of the lanes with street art in Bristol. This is available to an audience of around 10 people, led by a curator or a Bristol-based artist, who will explore the city for two hours. It is an opportunity to enjoy the atmosphere of the work, which is different from the actual photographs and videos found online, and to get an insight into the origins of Bristol's street art through conversation. It will cost £20.

Mediums, indicative artists/participants

- **Mediums: digital format + indicative participants**

As Foster (2004) indicates, every archive is built on disaster or the threat of it, and is pledged to a ruin that cannot be prevented. Street art, which always exists side by side with deletion and weather deterioration, is constantly exposed to the same environment as he describes for the archive. Considering the environment of these stripped-down works, it is better to archive them online in digital format. In addition, referring to the mission statement created by our group, I suggest that for an interactive and open curation for the audience, it would be desirable to have a platform where I could co-create with them. The digital format would be in the form of a website, with separate locations where contributions could be made and where the accumulated works could be

viewed in conjunction with a map of Bristol. The map would be in the form of a combination of Street View perspectives and aerial views, such as Google Street Art described above. The differentiation from these is that the focus on Bristol, one of the world's leading street art cities, is expected to leave a higher quality archive. In addition, by allowing citizens and visitors to participate in the 'curation' of the site, it will generate more interest in the work, the artists and street art as a whole and can be claimed as an artistic symbol of the city.

- **Indicative artists**

Focuses specifically on Banksy, the single most famous street artist to emerge from Bristol. As of April 2024, nine Banksy works exist in Bristol city centre. (Visit Bristol, n.d.) Although Banksy has fans all over the world, much of his work exists only in memory and in photographs. According to Ellsworth-Jones (2013), of the 52 pieces of Banksy's street art recorded so far in London, 40 pieces have completely disappeared, whitewashed or destroyed. The situation is such that works are constantly at risk and the possibility that works currently accessible in Bristol will also be removed cannot be ruled out. This is the situation not only for world-renowned artists such as Banksy, but also for unknown artists. Such works could be subject to removal of street art by the government or municipal authorities. In London alone, unauthorised works are removed using £100 million a year on the grounds that they do not add value to the area. (Greater London Authority, 2002) In addition to such deliberate removals, street art usually disappears over time. This includes new drawings from above as well as deterioration. (Hansen and Danny, 2015) The question then arises as to which works are eligible for archiving, but this is left to the public and the audience. If they decide that it is street art, they submit it to the platform, so the submitted works can be recognised.



Aachoo!! By Banksy (2020). 'Aachoo!!': Banksy confirms new sneezing woman mural as his latest work. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/banksy-bristol-mural-aachoo-intl-hnk/index.html>

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