



## **Illegal Urban Art and Naples: between mappings and contemporary iconoclasm**

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### **Abstract**

Urban art, as a form of expression that directly engages with the social and spatial context, plays a crucial role in the transformation and reinterpretation of contemporary urban spaces. Beyond the now-established initiatives of urban regeneration, which are excluded from this contribution, numerous other realities have embraced it as a powerful agent of change, capable of breaking silence and social isolation, and of stimulating a new dialogue between citizens and the broader world. Naples, in its complex and intricate stratifications, continuously responds to the illegal incursions of artists from all over the world. This welcoming peculiarity makes the city a gratifying stage for this aesthetic language, which evolves through ever-changing codes. In this context, urban art develops within a personal dialectic between aesthetic inclusivity and semiotic closure, creating a stratified and varied urban experience. With a persistent and dynamic attitude, it finds its expression not just in so-called non-places or architectural interstices, but on new artistic surfaces that are now the sites of contemporary aesthetic incursions.

This study doesn't aim to provide an exhaustive historical overview of Naples' urban art but rather seeks to highlight a specific focus: the investigation of illegal aesthetic languages that are systematically distributed, almost as if to map the urban surfaces that guide the public's gaze. In contrast, interventions that are forcefully imposed on any available surface, with no method other than attitude and quantity, are examined as an act of contemporary iconoclasm. In pursuit of this aim, and with an inevitable formal and conceptual opposition, the study examines two case studies: graffiti writers cyop&kaf's artistic activity within Naples' historical center and suburbs, and the interventions of the German 1UP Crew in Naples, dating back to the end of 2019, with a particular attention to their subversive presence on the brutalist architecture of the peripheral neighborhood of Scampia, which has left a strong impact on the popular reality of the place, both from an aesthetic and social point of view.

### **Keywords:**

Urban Art; Naples; Graffiti writing; Contemporary Iconoclasm; cyop&kaf; Quore Spinato; 1UP Crew.

Urban art, in its many forms and declinations, is today a phenomenon that deeply questions the ways in which urban space is perceived, inhabited and reinterpreted. It is not just an aesthetic practice, but a true social language that inscribes itself in places, transforms their physiognomy and helps redefine the relationship between the

individual, the community and the environment. In the contemporary panorama, many cities have welcomed – sometimes consciously, sometimes in a more fragmented way – the irruption of urban art as an opportunity for change. In this case, we are not talking about institutionalized urban regeneration projects, but about

spontaneous and often illegal interventions that impose themselves as acts of direct communication, capable of breaking the silence of the margins and activating new forms of dialogue. Naples, in this sense, represents an extraordinarily significant context. Its complex, stratified and continuously changing urban morphology, porous <sup>1</sup>, to use a definition by Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), constitutes not only the container, but also the co-protagonist of these languages. The city responds, absorbs and relaunches: it welcomes the incursions of local and international artists, transforming urban surfaces into spaces of visual narration and symbolic tension <sup>2</sup>.

The aim of this intervention is not to propose a historical reconstruction of Neapolitan urban art, but rather to focus on some specific experiences that allow us to read the aesthetic and semiotic dynamics in progress, creating real territorial mappings through what are considered here as contemporary iconoclasies. The focus is on those illegal languages that not only systematically multiply on the skin of the city, but seem to respond to an internal logic that guides the gaze, stimulates reflection and questions the symbolic hierarchies of the urban context.

Two case studies will guide this analysis: on the one hand, the widespread and deeply rooted action of cyop&kaf <sup>3</sup>, an artistic duo active in Naples' historic center

and suburbs, with a particular reference to the Quore Spinato project within the quartieri spagnoli; on the other, the interventions of the Berlin crew 1UP <sup>4</sup>, which appeared in 2020 in a striking way in the area of the historic center and Scampia, on the brutalist architecture of the neighborhood. Two different approaches, two forms of contemporary iconoclasm that nevertheless allow us to deeply question the meaning and scope of these forms of expression from different points of view. Through these experiences, this contribution seeks to clarify how urban art can make space – literally and symbolically – in a dense and lively urban context such as the Neapolitan one, and how it can act, at times, as a critical device capable of revealing the tensions and latent possibilities of the contemporary city, creating territorial mappings that after decades still characterize some areas of the historic center of Naples.

Identifying the decade between the 1980s and 1990s as a turning point in the spread of countercultures in Naples, it is worth making a parenthesis on what were the main expressive languages that this research will analyze later. Briefly contextualizing, Naples, in that period, was experiencing a moment of great social and political difficulty: just after the crisis of the Irpinia earthquake of 1980 (and the bradyseism of 1986), it was marked by unemployment, poverty and an incredible marginalization of large portions of the population.

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1 - Cfr. W. Benjamin, A. Lācis (1925), E. Cicchini (ed.), *Napoli porosa*, Dante & Descartes, Naples, 2020, pp. 6-15. The essay, entitled *Neapel* in the first version of the collection, is part of the anthology *Immagini di città* (1930) edited together with the German playwright, and seeks to highlight the «law still to be deciphered that regulates this life» or «porosity»: the almost alienating interpenetration and stratification of opposing elements, of antithetical yet coexisting dimensions, both tangible and linked to another world.

2 - Cfr. L. Carannante, *Il corpo del territorio. Pensare alla pelle urbana come esperienza estetica*, in Zeusi. *Linguaggi contemporanei di sempre* (Vol. 18), artem, Napoli, 2024, pp. 66-67.

3 - cyop&kaf, kaf&cyop: not a duo, not a single, not a group, all of these definitions combined or none at all. Active since the 1990s with the Neapolitan crew KTM, they are part of the graffiti writing scene, experimenting with numerous stylistic and figurative evolutions, also reported in this study. For more information: [www.cyopekaf.org](http://www.cyopekaf.org). While the author was working on this research, the artists decided to interrupt their collaboration, therefore the author is not responsible for any failure of the links about their work reported in the footnotes.

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4 - The 1UP crew is a graffiti writing collective founded in Berlin in the early 2000s, known internationally for its spectacular, illegal, rapid-fire actions on trains, subways, and urban surfaces of all kinds.

At the same time, it was also a city in full cultural ferment, in which countercultures, dissent and the search for new forms of expression<sup>5</sup> found fertile ground, as well as, however, the spread of crime and drugs. This climate of social tension and search for another identity has clearly favored the development of an art that from the walls of the house descends to the street, and that, in addition to aesthetics, to the quality-quantity binomial<sup>6</sup>, was deeply linked to and narrated the problems of everyday life in the territory for the territory. Graffiti writing was one of the answers to the need to aesthetically express social discomfort within the urban context.

In Italy<sup>7</sup>, although not at the same pace as the rest of the world, the practice of writing began to spread especially starting from the macro-period mentioned above, touching the most remote suburbs until it embraced the metropolitan centers. Speaking of Naples specifically, several realities were distinguished that are still active, which served as a meeting point for all the nuances arising from the countercultural need that was gaining more and more space. In Naples, most of the exponents of the underground writing scene were interested in and developed over the years a style increasingly tending towards the figurative. The mid-90s saw the peak of the spread of tags, subversive posters and increasingly elaborate graffiti, with the undisputed pioneers being the KTM

crew<sup>8</sup>, of which cyop&kaf are part along with Polo, Sha-One, Zemi, for example. Another visual approach at an urban level was given by Felice Pignataro (1940–2004), founder of GRIDAS (Gruppo di Risveglio dal Sonno), an association still active in the area with headquarters in Scampia<sup>9</sup>. On the one hand, therefore, the American lessons were followed, on the other the example of Mexican muralists. Returning to cyop&kaf, it was they who, starting from the early 2000s, started a non-stop aesthetic evolution, transforming lettering into bionic birds and tombs, monochrome and threatening silhouettes, deformed and sincere Teste Matte<sup>10</sup>, accompanied by scathing phrases often of social denunciation, which the city was continuously flooded with. During those years, in the turn to figurative art, the imprints of writing can still be recognized through the flat use of spray cans; later, however, they will also be replaced, preferring rollers and brushes, broad areas for the creation of humanoid figures made concrete without waiting for darkness, in an iconoclasm without interruption. The transition from the study of the letter to the formal search for the image, remaining faithful to both the support and, therefore, to the space, is more natural than ever, especially in light of a stratification of intentions and messages that characterizes and fits into the territorial corpus of a city founded on sacred cults spread right over the same surfaces. In this sense, even the figures of these artists take over the collective imagination, being welcomed, renamed and chosen as a sort of new sacred testimony, both for the evident iconographic references and, precisely, for their presence that, although ephemeral, remains stuck in the folds of the city's skin.

These are, evidently in broad terms, the fundamental nodes to frame the objectives of this research which

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5 - Among others, one might think of Diamond Dogs, active from 1984 to 1987. It was the nucleus of one of the most stimulating and innovative cultural periods in recent Neapolitan, Italian, and international history. The club was located in that maze of tunnels that still crisscross the city, accessed from Via Cavone, in the city center, and before the caves became a nightclub, they were used as a shelter during the Second World War. Drawing inspiration from a variety of places, people, cultures, and styles (including that of David Bowie, who also influenced the founders' choice of the name), it was not only a fusion of cultural trends from abroad, but a pure manifestation of the distress born of social marginalization.

6 - Cfr. L. Carannante, *Il corpo del territorio. Pensare alla pelle urbana come esperienza estetica*, in *Zeusi. Linguaggi contemporanei di sempre* (Vol. 18), artem, Napoli, 2024, p. 65.

7 - See, among others: D. Lucchetti, *Writing. Storia, linguaggi, arte nei graffiti di strada*, Castelveccchi, Rome, 1999; E. Bianco, I. Hoppe, *A Question of Style: Graffiti Art Between Art/Theory and Practice*, Edifir, Florence, 2023; H. Chalfant, M. Cooper, *Subway Art*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2015.

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8 - Cfr. A. Bove, *Vai mo. Storie di rap a Napoli e dintorni*, Napoli Monitor, Naples, 2016.

9- For further information: F. Pignataro, *L'utopia sui muri: i murali del GRIDAS, come e perché fare murali*, L.A.N., Naples, 1993.

10 - This is the title of their exhibition at the Dopolavoro printing studio, held from June 13rd to October 13rd, 2022, which featured artwork from their posters posted in Naples previously. The title refers to the name of one of the SSC Napoli Ultras fan groups and literally means "crazy heads". For more information about the exhibition: [www.dopolavoro.org/exhibitions](http://www.dopolavoro.org/exhibitions)

aim first of all to consider these aesthetic approaches as contemporary iconoclasm. The term iconoclasm traditionally refers to the systematic destruction of sacred images<sup>11</sup>, typical of specific historical periods in which the image was perceived as a threat to religious or political power. In its contemporary meaning, however, the concept can be expanded to include aesthetic and political practices that do not aim so much at the physical cancellation of the image, as at its subversion, profound alteration or reappropriation. Contemporary iconoclasm is therefore not necessarily a destructive act, but can be configured as a gesture of radical criticism towards the dominant symbolic order: a visual and semantic attack on the representational devices that regulate the public appearance of power, urban decorum and collective narration. In this sense, illegal practices such as graffiti, as is the case for example with those of the 1UP Crew, which saturate the visual space with a serial, reiterated, omnipresent signature, can be read as an iconoclastic action not because they erase, but because they impose another image—that of the group itself—which obscures, interrupts or contaminates the official surface.

In the field of cultural and visual studies, theorists such as W. J. Thomas Mitchell (Anaheim, 1942) and Bruno Latour (1947–2022) have contributed to redefining iconoclasm in a relational way<sup>12</sup>: no longer just the destruction of icons, but a continuous tension between the visible and the invisible, between dominant images and deviant images. Mitchell, in particular, argues

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11 - For an introduction to the historical notion of iconoclasm, see: D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989; H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. E. Jephcott, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994. For a contemporary approach that reinterprets iconoclasm in terms of subversion and reappropriation of images, see: W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005.

12 - Cfr. W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005; B. Latour, *What Is Iconoclasm? Or Is There a World Beyond the Image Wars?*, in *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art*, B. Latour, P. Weibel (ed.), ZKM/Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 14-37.

that “pure iconoclasm does not exist, since even the act of destroying an image creates another, that of its destruction”<sup>13</sup>. From this point of view, illegal urban art produces new symbolically charged images precisely when it comes into conflict with the dominant aesthetic code.

In the urban context, this type of iconoclasm manifests itself in three main ways:

- Iconic saturation: as in the case of the 1UP crew, the compulsive repetition of the graphic sign (tag, throw-up, blockbuster) becomes an act of visual violence, which cancels the communicative value of the original support (building, wall, infrastructure), creating a new urban semantics, namely that of symbolic occupation.
- Semiotic interference: other practices act more subtly, they do not erase an image or a structure, but ironically distort it or re-contextualize it (e.g. posters, stencils, sticker art). The institutional image is thus returned to the public in a new light, as is the case with the mapping by cyop&kaf.
- Spatial iconoclasm: the mere fact of intervening in forbidden, invisible or marginal places (such as the roofs of Scampia, railway infrastructures or the interstices of a marginal neighborhood), produces a symbolic rupture. It is an iconoclastic gesture that does not affect the image itself, but its context, forcing new meanings into spaces considered “empty” or “negative”.

The vandalistic gesture, considered destructive, is at the same time a vital and creative gesture. By generating new aesthetic and affective communities, every tag, every graffiti, every visual occupation of an urban space contributes to a counter-iconography of the present, where the city becomes both an archive and a new battlefield. The aesthetic node of example and main case study is the iconographic mapping<sup>14</sup> traced by the artists cyop&kaf from 2011 to 2013, and with several

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13 - Cfr. W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005, p. 11.

14 - QS or Quore Spinato, further explored later.

subsequent resumptions, on the surfaces of the dense territorial network of the *quartieri spagnoli*<sup>15</sup> of Naples' historic center, a starting point of great interest, both from a figurative and social point of view. As previously mentioned, it's worth underlining that the activity of the 1UP crew in Naples in 2020 is taken into consideration as an example diametrically opposed to the illegal approach of Quore Spinato project. Outlining the story-images of an autonomous, disturbing and fairy-tale-like narration, on any surface at their disposal, the Neapolitan artists said «The characters I paint draw me, not vice versa»<sup>16</sup>, confirming part of the nature of this type of artistic practice, involving in a spontaneous and necessary execution at the same time. At this point, questions are inevitable: how much of this narrative need through images reaches, and how much remains, in the eyes of the beholder? How is the rewriting of a place captured, if at all, through these unauthorized visual traces? How do those who inhabit and experience the city perceive and participate in this aesthetic experience?

The keystones of this urban rewriting remain anchored in the absolute spontaneity and purity of acts of expressive disobedience that do not respond to any rule other than that dictated by the self, causing a split of love and hate in the eyes of anyone who looks at the results, a condition that, if we look closely, unites them to all art canonically understood. In this sense, where possible, it is useful to look for formal traces of graffiti in the lessons of the past, and more specifically in the Art Brut theorized by Dubuffet<sup>17</sup>. This research will not

conduct an examination of each work, but will examine the entirety of this project as a structured and shared territorial and emotional mapping, which the artists have also made accessible online through an orderly, inclusive and absolutely accessible digital rewriting<sup>18</sup>.

Tutto quello che c'è stato in mezzo, tra me e ogni singola pagina scritta tra le righe e le rughe di questo meraviglioso quartiere, è storia privata che non merita mercimonio. Quando mai l'amore si è messo in mostra? Solo chi sbandiera partecipazione, riqualificazione, intervento sociale costruisce carriere mettendosi in vetrina come certe vecchie prostitute. Qui non c'è nulla da dimostrare e molto da fare ancora. Intanto ho dipinto senza freno certe mie inquietudini (che credo siano anche di molti altri) che spesso inquietavano a loro volta; e allora non mi sento neanche di tacere che molti considerano terrificanti le mie opere e allora intervengono chiedendo di disegnare cose più allegre, floreali, carine (è la dittatura del carino!). Non li assecondo. Perché se da un lato è prezioso il loro coinvolgimento emotivo, dall'altro lo è anche la mia autonomia. Se mi mettessi a consolare rischierei di accomunarmi ai tanti che continuamente cercano di nascondere il disastro sotto il tappeto. Dunque insisto dipingendo le mie ossessioni, che sono poi quelle che l'humus circostante alimenta e se possibile aumenta.<sup>19</sup>

Quore Spinato, like the project conceived and realized in the historic center of old Taranto<sup>20</sup>, is a narrative articulated on multiple levels – pictorial, audiovisual<sup>21</sup> and written – that restores the restless relationship that language and representations have with the history and contemporaneity of Naples' *quartieri spagnoli*. The authors create 242 non-commissioned paintings on the walls, shutters and doors of the district's lower floors, in a time span that reaches up to a few years ago (the

15 - The "Spanish Quarters" are an area of Naples' historic center area whose name derives from the fact that they were created in the 16th century to house the garrisons of Spanish soldiers, present in the city as part of the Spanish Empire. These neighborhoods served both as quarters for the troops and as a symbol of Spanish rule over the city, with the function of maintaining order and quelling any revolts. In contemporary times, the *Quartieri Spagnoli* are a place of profound transformation, a crossroads between popular authenticity and a strong tourist impact.

16 - Cfr. cyop&kaf, L. Rossomando, R. Rosa (a cura di), QS. Quore Spinato. *Quartieri Spagnoli Napoli, 2011-2013*, Napoli Monitor, Naples, 2013, pp. 7-8; translation by the author, 4/10/25.

17 - Cfr L. Carannante, *Il corpo del territorio. Pensare alla pelle urbana come esperienza estetica*, in Zeusi. *Linguaggi contemporanei di sempre* (Vol. 18), artem, Naples, 2024, pp. 68-69.

18 - QS' map: [www.cyopekaf.org/qs](http://www.cyopekaf.org/qs)

19 - Cfr. cyop&kaf, L. Rossomando, R. Rosa (a cura di), QS. Quore Spinato. *Quartieri Spagnoli Napoli, 2011-2013*, Napoli Monitor, Naples, 2013, pp. 7-8.

20 - Cfr. cyop&kaf, *TARANTO - Un anno in città vecchia*, Napoli Monitor, Naples, 2014.

21 - QUORE SPINATO. *Appunti visivi dai Quartieri Spagnoli*: <https://vimeo.com/84033014?share=copy>

last in 2022). The large number of works arises from a set of reciprocal and spontaneous exchanges with the inhabitants of the neighborhood. The semiotic point of view allows the analysis of the space of representation that is strictly related to the milieu, opening up to mythical, anthropological and poetic experiences of the place, in line with the practices of space revealed by Michel de Certeau (1925–1986). The result is a re-actualization of the sacred that attests to the complexity of the religious sentiment of the Neapolitan people, for example, closely linked to everyday life<sup>22</sup>. Field research has revealed that the subliminal nature of the paintings prompts ideas of self-narration and self-discovery: if examined closely, the anthropomorphic drawings trigger empathic effects that can be analyzed from the perspective of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961)'s phenomenology of perception<sup>23</sup>. The neighborhood becomes a text of inscription and re-inscription, a tool for progressive reinterpretations of the subjectivity of the inhabitants. QS punctuates without the intent to punctuate, narrates without wanting to narrate. It accompanies through interventions that are perfectly recognizable by style, language, influences, forms. As mentioned, cyop&kaf from a certain period took their aesthetic research to the extreme, highlighting those lessons in which, in addition to the cornerstones of reference, one recognizes the taste for the art of the real, of the alienated, of that spontaneous, pure Art Brut that listens and ironizes, which in this case is inserted between the cracks, between the holes of the tuff ruined by time, in masks that are both disturbing and dreamy at the same time. These figures, often giants, chase each other and march, fly, fall, climb, built with large and flat fields of mostly primary colors that contribute to the general estrangement. They are representatives of a potentially infinite implicit narrative that can only find form in those who look at them and are willing to undermine their different readings, never elsewhere.

From a figurative point of view, within these grotesque, gangly and violent protagonists, if we look closely, we can recognize many of the lessons of the artistic cornerstones to which cyop&kaf have referred in their evolution: the Neapolitan painter Mario Persico (1930–2022) who, with Gruppo 58 of which he was one of the founders, and the Pataphysical philosophy<sup>24</sup>, suggests the reworking of some archetypal signs in initially monstrous, then increasingly fairy-tale-like silhouettes; the aforementioned artist and activist Felice Pignataro; finally, Ernest Pignon-Ernest (Nice, 1942), a member of the Situationist movement who spent long periods in Naples, studying its historical and mythical stratifications, working on his posters which, once glued, seem to be incorporated, absorbed into the porous fabric of the urban surface, as if the figures, at that point, were an active part of it, in the strong need to eliminate the gap between art and life<sup>25</sup>. During the visual walk, in addition to the adventurous protagonists of a singular dreamlike restlessness, in this case the story behind the choice of places in which to give them life attracts attention: the spatial component plays a primary role. The work exists thanks to the mixture that is created between image, place and person, through which that sacred magic typical of a Neapolitaness linked to aspects considered crucial for everyday life can be reactivated. Still in relation to the inspections, no less important, as mentioned, is the influence of Pignataro, who considered the context as the starting point of the aesthetic experience of the murals: the spaces, with their strengths and weaknesses, splits, cracks, dislocated stones, holes and rickety surfaces are all exploited, they are the story, they weave the plot exactly like the colors and shapes that make up the final iconography. Furthermore, the artists also absorb Pignataro's need for dialogue with those who live there: exactly like the activist, the two artists open themselves to contact with the kids of the neighborhoods, who intervene in the creative process both from a conceptual and formal

22 - Cfr. L. Carannante, *Urban Sacred Symbols: Folk Devotion Elements' Subversive Revival in Naples' Urban Art*, in *GSA - Graffiti and Street Art*, 2(2), 2024, p. 45.

23 - Cfr. M. Merleau-Ponty, trans. Colin Smith, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge, London, 2002, pp. 48-49.

24 - Cfr. cyop&kaf, L. Rossomando, *Mario Persico, elogio dell'ombra*, in «Napoli Monitor», article published on January the 14th, 2011: [www.napolimonitor.it/mario-persico-elogio-dellombra/](http://www.napolimonitor.it/mario-persico-elogio-dellombra/)

25 - For further information, see: AAVV, *Vicoli della memoria. L'opera di Ernest Pignon-Ernest a Napoli*, Electa Napoli, Naples, 1997; A. Velter, *Ernest Pignon-Ernest*, Editions Gallimard, Paris, 2014.

point of view, helping them in filling in the fields already traced. A relationship of mutual importance and growth that extends to everyone and that remains far from any kind of pedagogical purpose. In this sense, with this project cyop&kaf aim at a self-perception dictated by emotion and permanence in memory, in a continuous and stable exchange that flows onto the very skin of the city. The artists said they had gone through years of deep pessimism before the conclusion of their interventions related to the QS project. Speaking of the relationship with the inhabitants of the neighborhood, they realized only later that collective participation was anything but a dialogue between a few, and that if on the one hand the passer-by is stimulated to invent a narrative for that particular image, on the other the artist must place himself in a condition of continuous listening; as if, for this artist, drawing meant first of all rethinking human relationships<sup>26</sup>.

Non si tratta, tuttavia, solo dell'assedio minuzioso di uno spazio già molto connotato, ma di un progetto complesso che tenta di riconfigurare l'interazione tra opere e luoghi e costringe chi guarda – o meglio chi rincorre il succedersi di opere tra i vicoli, i bassi, i tetti, i muri più inaccessibili e le saracinesche più malandate – a intraprendere la propria lettura di quello spazio improvvisamente animato di figure e colori, abbandonando i preconetti e cedendo a un'identificazione metamorfotica che coinvolge tutti (abitanti, passanti, turisti) nel mondo di ossessioni che le superfici restituiscono.<sup>27</sup>

The apparent structural rigor of the Quore Spinato project, distributed on every usable surface of the quartieri spagnoli after a careful investigation conducted thanks to direct contact with the inhabitants, is briefly brought to attention the activity of the German crew 1UP carried out in Naples between 2019 and 2020, of which some examples are reported here.

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26 - Cfr. M. Borio (translation by the author, 9/10/25): <http://www.nuoviargomenti.net/poesie/cio-che-non-siamo-cio-che-non-vogliamo-il-libro-a-cielo-apertodi-cyopkaf-la-napoli-dei-writers-la-poesia-incontra-la-pittura-3/>

27 - Cfr. cyop&kaf, L. Rossomando, R. Rosa (a cura di), QS. Quore Spinato. Quartieri Spagnoli Napoli, 2011-2013, Napoli Monitor, Naples, 2013, p. 7.

Unlike cyop&kaf's project, for example, despite the approach being substantially the same and having similar intentions given the illegality of the gesture and the performativity of the language, the German crew violently breaks into the historic center of the city, visually appropriating it through what we could define as acts of contemporary iconoclasm on some monuments and historic buildings, conditioning the aesthetic balance of the city<sup>28</sup>. With a particular reference to the action linked to Scampia, the crew concretizes one of its final graffiti on the brutalist facade of one of the last sails reached through contact with the inhabitants. The yellow blockbuster, adding to the numerous throw-ups and tags in the historic center, tells of an expressive urgency shown differently than that of cyop&kaf, which creates a territorial mapping without a real narrative rigor, but which nevertheless falls within a scheme of another expressive need, canceling the communicative value of the original support, in the creation of a new urban semantics through symbolic occupation. To follow the hypothetical territorial mapping inscribed in the historic center of Naples by the crew, you can walk in any direction and without following any type of path, since the invasion was total and all-encompassing. On the contrary, what happens following the figures of cyop&kaf in the quartieri spagnoli neighborhoods is a walk that somehow suggests a sense of belonging as opposed to the sense of alienation and bewilderment.

As emerged from the interviews conducted, in both cases, from a territorial and social point of view, the inhabitants of the historic center of Naples, as well as those of Scampia, will always associate these interventions with a type of violent aesthetic intrusion, distinguishing however the narrative of 1UP from that of the Quore Spinato project by cyop&kaf for approaches, latencies and above all emotional intertwining created with the city. Both interventions still exist, and the humanoids of QS, now adopted by the inhabitants of

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28 - Here for the first video of the action in Naples in 2020, where it's possible to see their approach, decidedly obsessive and violent, in a certain sense selfish, which aims at self-affirmation (in this case of the crew's name) above anything else, human beings and values: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KAQDKnngM>

the neighborhoods, it is almost as if they had taken an active part in the life and daily life of that particular place, ready to survive in memory as soon as they have disappeared completely, definitively erased by time. Despite the differences, both cases reveal a character tied to disobedience and a visual freedom that is still almost entirely unexplored, unheard of and even close to the sphere of play and childhood. Yet, while it retains strongly childish aesthetic traits as said, upon closer inspection, it retains nothing of that dimension except the purity and immediacy of performance, the impetus to move without regard for fears or constraining barriers within a territorial body whose epidermis, stratified over the years, speaks ever more loudly. It is undeniable that each artist's stylistic traits are different, and that each expresses themselves based on their own evolution and communicative needs, but remaining true and faithful to the New York school, it's clear that the greatest impetus is decisively provided by the painful, obsessive need<sup>29</sup> to express oneself here and now, to live here and now, with absolute transparency of purpose. Space, of primary importance to the entire artistic project, is considered a living place, a body with which, in a certain sense, a dialogue and a genuine relationship of interdependence are established. In this sense, the layers of execution of the work—study and planning, performance in space and on the surface, formal realization—assert themselves by manipulating the urban skin, contributing to that indispensable and already rich stratification of the unique narrative of that specific fabric, from which the population is in no way excluded. As confirmed by the case study, the bystander plays a significant role throughout this type of artistic operation, which is disinterested and far removed from any intent of urban regeneration and reclamation. The goal is to be in and of the place, to belong to it, and to make it one's own through a simultaneously disinterested and invasive presence. Actively engaging those who inhabit that stretch of territory, without dramatically altering their habits, graffiti creates and emphasizes a necessary meta-narrative with a deliberately short-term expiration, once

again in response to the values dictated by being here and now. Graffiti is deliberately ephemeral, and aims to be so, according to strategies tied to discourses that remain more or less visible on the urban context, manipulating it: the graffiti artist appropriates the space in which he chooses to express himself, temporarily making it his own, aware that his trace, his passage materialized on the urban surface, has a variable duration based on various factors and from which he has no intention of escaping. Indeed, it continues to do so in a consuming manner, responding to a significantly physical, visceral need, because it wants and must, advancing an exasperated and powerful language, a unique and constantly evolving credo. Born as a manifestation of the crisis of a youth feeling helpless, rebelling against a society they don't recognize, graffiti has spread today as an authentic stylistic exercise, a cultural practice of aesthetic disobedience, more or less happily embraced within the territorial construct worldwide, capable of inducing a rewriting and subsequent reinterpretation of the urban dimension.

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29 - Cfr. L. Carannante, *Il corpo del territorio. Pensare alla pelle urbana come esperienza estetica*, in Zeusi. *Linguaggi contemporanei di sempre* (Vol. 18), artem, Naples, 2024, p. 64.