

Introduction to street arts in France

**Speech by Michèle BOSSEUR,
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Street theater, street arts, public art, street performances, outdoor shows... As many generic names to refer to street arts in France.

This has considerably changed over the last thirty years, has created and still creates a lot of debates!

“We play outside because it’s cold inside”. This is the way the militancy of street artists at the origin of the movement can be summed up.

Street art is, above all, a reconsideration of the relationship with the public, usually hidebound by the gap between the scene and the audience in traditional theaters.

Nowadays street arts are increasingly present in contemporary art of the 21th century with an artistic dimension, gradually expressing itself.

It stands out today with a great diversity together in :

- Invested artistic fields
- Ways of expression
- Age and size of companies
- And of course performance formats.

Heterogeneity is indeed the first impression that emerges from festivals and street arts programming.

- Acrobats on street corners
- Monumental parades
- Dance
- Fairground theater
- Theater of objects
- Street music
- Performance plastics
- New circus
- Etc... And so on...

The common reference for all companies is to include the art project at the heart of public space, and as said Cathy Avram Generik Vapeur « Street theater is not only working in public spaces but making spaces public ».

Political and poetic commitment of street artists is supported by one fundamental point : investing spaces other than the usual shows' places.

It uses public space as a collective space, a common place, shared by all, open to all and when the show takes place in the city, it is a unique emotion that people share.

Street art means inventing other links to the public by integrating art where, at first sight, there is none. It provides another vitality to social relations, close to the population.

Street arts in France are now getting to a very broad, very large population. But this is not the main point, the most important and what prevails of course is the artistic assertion and the quality of creations "Arts de la Rue".

Today, we have to recognize that street art experiences a strong enthusiasm of a very large audience and a growing interest of the public authorities in it.

It is hard to categorize street arts by subject. Nevertheless, we note that a majority of artists agree to identify themselves to "street theater". They also recognize that four major genres of street arts appear :

- Theater (48% of companies)
- Circus arts (27%)
- Music (18%)
- Fine arts (26%)

Street art is not a unique discipline but rather a combination of subjects.

Present-day street artists are interdisciplinary, generous and artistically demanding. They imagine dramaturgies designed for public space and invent new kinds of relationships to the spectator.

All these companies distinguish themselves by the way they have to play in the street and the aim that they convey.

They chose the street despite all its constraints including the weather, the floating attention of the audience and the differences between those who take part into the audience. Moreover, public space is a place where complete silence and deep night do not exist...

Street artists choose the street because of the space it provides, very different from theaters, unconventional. It has a very strong scenic dimension, necessary for their work, where everything is to be invented. Street art is as a "state of mind".

All the while, the stakes in France for street art was to manage to be recognized as a true artistic sector, equally funded by the institutions, as well as other disciplines of the performing arts.

The street art movement is young, just structured in the recent years which have been crucial to its development, in particular with the Time of street art and the 9 National Centers which carry a seal of approval.

The structured development that we know today started in 90's.

Lieux Publics, National Center of creating street art was created in 1982 by Michel Crespin

Festivals of Aurillac and Chalon in 1986

And it was only in 1993 that was created HorsLesMurs ? our ressource center ;

The first financial support from the institutions came in 1994, date of creation of the first « lieux de fabrique »

We had to wait until 1998 and 1999 to be recognized as a "priority" by Catherine Trautmann, former Minister of Culture

Time of street arts, asked by the entire profession only began in 2005.

Le Temps des Arts de la Rue

The Street Arts has always had a very fragile economy, which is based on the companies themselves.

For the most part, they have a strong cash flow, based largely on the sale of shows . .

The contribution of local communities is also important for the sector.

It should also include the system of intermittent, the unemployment insurance scheme for artists and technicians in France.

It is also a real help for companies.

In 2003, the questioning of this system by the french government considerably destabilizes the economy of the arts in France .

In April of the same year, the Federation of street art, which is a professional organization, made a request to the Ministry of Culture and Communication : a highlight for street art.

After four sessions of a group created at the initiative of the Federation, in collaboration with the Ministry of culture, a roadmap for the time street arts was writtent and serve as a basis for reflection for the realization of this important « Temps des Arts de la Rue » .

Le Temps des Arts de la Rue covers several issues

First of all visibilty: the street art should be seen and recognized but it is also pedagogy !

The aim of this plan was to experiment for three years (not one year, as the circus because far too short) new relationships between artists, communities and public networks .

It was a time for the profession to mobilize collective action, discussion and dialogue with all our partners. Financially, the goal was that the participation of the institutions doubled and passed from 6 million Euros to 12 million per annum .

We have not obtained all this amount.

Aids, however, increased from 6 M to almost 10 million euros per year .

It should also be noted that this budget had an effect on the territorial communities (the Regions)

In February 2005, in Marseille, Donnedieu de Vabres, Minister of Culture, officially opened « Le Temps des Arts de la Rue » .

10 new measures are undertaken from 2005:

1 - Identification of 9 national centers of production with additional resources and with a text frame which is a label today

2 - Structuring places run by identified companies

3 - Construction of the Cite des Arts in the Rue Marseille on support for artistic teams

4 - Consolidation of artistic teams (Creation of employment assistance, new conventionnements and increase of the amount of conventions)

5 - Affirming writing for street arts by public orders

6 - Supporting the emergence of young team

7 - Promotion of new ways of dissimulation (Creation of an additional funding via ONDA. (Office of Diffusion Natioanle Artistique)

8 - Wish to open borders and promote exchanges

9 Installation of FAIAR (Advanced Training and itinerant street arts) in Marseille.

10 -Increase communication

A committee has been created

It regroups thirty representatives of the french government and local authorities, institutions, professionals and qualified. Forum for discussion , he plays an advisory and liaison between institutions

Nine working groups met for three years to work in various aspects

- Production sites whose main function was to write the text of the National Centers

- Writing for public space
- Territories
- Dissimination
- International
- Training and careers
- Communication
- Events
- Public space and its rules

In conclusion , to day what can we say?

All measures have not been created, but today the sector is structured .

However, the situation of culture in France today is very fragile and so is the streets arts sector .

Landscape of street arts in France today

Companies

Hors Les Murs, which is our national resource center, identifies today 1063 street theater companies in France

Note that they were 400 in 1990, 760 in 2000

The geographical distribution shows a concentration of about 70% of companies in three regions

Ile de France 27%

South (Rhone-Alpes, Midi Pyrenees, Paca), 23%

West (Bretagne, Pays de Loire) 13% 6% in Britain.

A third of companies said to be installed in rural areas, about 2/3 installed in urban areas, 50% are located in peripheral areas of large cities.

37 companies are under agreement with the Ministry of culture.
450 shows are created on average per year.

Festivals and broadcast spaces

309 streets arts festivals are now identified
3 international festivals (Sotteville, Chalon and Aurillac)
and a dozen large festivals are nationally recognized (Morlaix, Libourne, Nevers etc ...)

72% are mainly between May and September

If a dozen of them are supported nationally, most festivals are based on proximity and wills of municipal associations.

They defend often (but not always) an artistic line program for street performances

If acting on urban space means

- divert the daily
 - surprise people,
- it is also to be sure that the audience is reclaiming urban space .

101 places programme art street

Our profession is structured.

Exist today

- A national center of creation

Lieux Publics, National Centre for creation based in Marseille.

Founded in 1982 by Michel Crespin it is the only national center headed by a creative artist.

It develops mainly work to support the creation and specific writing for urban space.

It also supports the creation of its director , actually Pierre Sauvageot .

Lieux Publics is heavily involved in several european networks and supports several creations in the PACA region.

- 9 National Centers of street art

Spread over the territory, they are the result of different stories and all very different .

L'Abattoir Chalon

L'Atelier 231 Sotteville - Les - Rouen

Le Fourneau Brest Bretagne

Le Parapluie Aurillac

Le Citron jaune Port Saint Louis du Rhone

Le Moulin Fondu Noisy le Sec
La Paperie St. Barthelemy d'Anjou
Pronomades Midi Pyrénées
L'Usine Boinot Niort

- 43 manufacturing sites, or places of residence , are shared equally spread over the territory

Workplaces for the companies, they also welcome other companies in creation

.- A resource center for street arts, HorsLesMurs

Its website, Circostrada , lists all street arts creations during the festivals in France and abroad.

HorsLesMurs manages among others, The Goliath and publishes several revues (Stradda)

.- Professional association, the Federation of Street Arts

Grouping professionals , within which , the entire profession is represented (director of CNAR, artists, programmers, technicians)

The Federation now has an important forum in our sector.

It is not a union and acts as a pressure group.

It is the source of many actions.

- the FAIAR (Advanced Training Itinerant Street Arts)

Every 18 months, it welcomes 15 new apprentices selected in France and Europe.

They travel through Europe

Note also that the sector has some aids for creation by the Ministry of culture (aid for creation or writing) SACD also provides scholarships for this year.

The local communities and local authorities have also the same type of aid. (Region, Etat, and cities)