



**Remote Solidarity and Remote Warfare:
Street Art and Military Visualizing Technologies
in Palestinian Territories.**

A Master's Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts (120 credits) in Visual Culture
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Abstract

This essay investigates the ways of convergence of the spectacle with the surveillance, as suggested by Thomas Mitchell and Nicholas Mirzoeff. In order to ground their suggested theory in concrete visual empirical cases, I situate my analysis in the Palestinian territories. I juxtapose ostensibly disparate visual phenomena deriving from the street art and the military visualizing technologies. The first part consists of a comparison between JR's project *Face2Face* and the biometric passports implemented in the area. By using the same visual motif of the image of the face, street art promotes social dialogue while biometrics inscribe the borderline demarcation onto the bodily traits. Consequently, they testify for the convergence of the spectacle with the surveillance for diametrically different purposes. In the second chapter, I focus on the multiple reproduction of the stencil painting *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* created by Banksy and on the visual analysis of two hacked images from Israeli drones. Referencing Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, I argue that the advancing visualizing technologies for the mechanical and digital reproducibility are being appropriated by the spectacle and the surveillance for supplementary reasons. The massive consumption of the image of the stencil soothes and absorbs the fatal dangers evoked by the illusionary nature of drone footage. The last chapter consists of the exploration of the transferability of an artwork to the Western cities and galleries. The analysis is based on Miwon Kwon's theory and begins with the transfer of JR's project in European cities followed up by the *Whole in the Wall* exhibition and concludes with the *Astro Noise* exhibition. The aim is to highlight the transitions occurred in the beholder, from the act of observing, to the bodily engagement and to ultimately becoming the observed and the surveilled.

Keywords: *street art, spectacle, biometrics, drone surveillance, Palestine.*

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Introduction

Purpose and Research Questions

It is difficult to define whether a journalistic article or an academic essay regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not timely and seasonable, even if this might not be in the writer's intention. The longstanding ongoing confrontations and ammunitions have started to shape the normality of the area, with no longer giving the impression of an emergency. Despite having in our disposition increasingly more sophisticated and accurate media technologies to provide the public with news and war footage on a 24hour basis, the situation remains unsolved while the news ability to spread rises. This essay is not about the conflict in the Palestinian territories in geopolitical terms, nor about the implications of the affective dynamic invoked in the Western audience when encountering images of war from these areas. As a point of departure for my engagement with the topic, I consider the proliferation of the street art activities in the area surrounded by the West Bank Wall.

Consequently, I formulated an assumption according to which the bombardment with the war footage of maimed orphans and raids in refugee camps contributed unwittingly to the compassion fatigue of the Western audience. An alternative channel of representation had to be found to raise global awareness to a wider audience without the imposition of graphic content onto their retinas. The morbid spectacle of the images of war would be counterbalanced by the colorful and intriguing images of street artworks, without the one form of visual representation to replace or exclude the other. The efficiency of this alternative channel of representation through street art warrants and enables the local population to engage to versatile cultural events, be it for local initiatives or projects undertaken by foreign artists. As a result, the street artworks and the cultural events in the area partake in the broader spectrum of urban creativity. My concern for the purposes of this research is to delimit the notion of urban creativity in the street art and graffiti practices, and their function as a spectacle. Without implying that all forms of urban creativity are spectacularized, my perspective focuses on the street artworks that are initially designated for and end up with a worldwide consumption. Therefore, this essay will not focus on the cultural initiatives which create participatory and interacting communities in the area, despite acknowledging the positive significant impact of the street art scene in the locals' daily lives and the consequent revitalizing tourism.

Instead, my attention is oriented towards the spectacular dimension of street artworks created in the area by internationally renowned artists (i.e. JR and Banksy) and their reception by the remote beholder in Western societies. My consideration of some street artworks from the Palestinian

territories as spectacle relies on their ability to spread throughout the screens, and as a user-friendly content to be consumed without questioning the beholder's awareness of the Palestinian plight. Moreover, it relies on their digital and mechanical reproduction and through their large consumption to attract attention as a decoy, but very often to dazzlingly disorient, from a concrete and consistent information to an abstract colorful message of encouragement and solidarity. Although as pictures of power, the street artworks convey an empowering message of struggle and resistance, the power in the pictures lies in their ability to impose a phantasmagoric effect on the beholder, omitting the need to ground their interpretation in the real events of the area. Therefore, in order to understand the power of pictures, it is indispensable to be able to contextualize them¹. Having deliberately and explicitly distanced my focus from the war photography (or else the spectacularity of war pornography), while I was researching for the street art world in the area, my curiosity for the surrounding environment of the military practices increased. An analysis of the artworks would remain incomplete and perhaps misleading if it disregarded the military context. This is the context within which these artworks have been produced and against which they protest. Therefore, my ambition is to situate the street art movement in the area within the wider context of the Israeli military managements and to explore the limits of its artistic criticality.

Without any intention to derogate the positive effects of the street art in the area, both in terms of media representation and in locals' recreational engagement, my objective is to stress the limits of representation of the Palestinian plight when it is merely based on the street art and to restore the artworks' interpretation by contextualizing them in the urban military environment. In doing so, I focus my research on the visual military apparatuses and techniques which enable to establish in the area a regime of surveillance and military management. The implementation of the visual technological developments in policing operations, such as cameras and biometric passports in checkpoints and watchtowers, or armed drones constitute the counterpart of my analysis.

Inspired by Nicholas Mirzoeff's terminology while following the interpretation presented by the professor Ilaria Hoppe², street art can be regarded as a counter-visibility³, since it opposes to the dominant and normative pictorial discourse by the authorities and the corporations. But as shown in the case of the Palestinian areas it can obtain spectacular and commercial dimensions. Therefore, I argue that the visible street art from the area designated for international consumption can be a hybrid form⁴ between counter-visibility and spectacle. On the other hand the emerging and

1 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, USA, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 324

2 Hoppe I., 'Urban Art as Counter-visibility?', in (ed.) P. Soares Neves and D. V. de Freitas Simões, International Conference *Street Art & Urban creativity*, Lisbon, 2014, 260-265.

3 N. Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, USA, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 308

4 Although, street art as counter-visibility wishes to escape and resist the domination of spectacle relations, in the case of some street artworks in the Palestinian territories, there has been a major commodification as spectacle.

expanding network of surveillance and military visual policing techniques are described as a post-panoptic neo-visibility⁵. It remains to be further investigated if and to which extent the counter-visibility of street art can resist being absorbed, assimilated and neutralized by the spread of the neo-visibility. The implementation of the doctrine of the military urbanism demands and fosters for innovative and critical artistic initiatives within the realm of urban creativity. Military urbanism suggests that with the growing number of populations gathered in urban environments and metropolis, the need for crowd control, surveillance and management of the multitude⁶ must be met primarily with visual techniques. As a result, unknowingly the pedestrian, the citizen, the consumer and the city resident provide the authorities and subsequently the corporate world with numerous of visual data imperceptible to the human eye.

Arguably the Palestinian cities are not so computerized compared to the Western industrial societies. However, it remains an appropriate case study. According to scholars (e.g. Weizman, Graham, Foucault) there has been an experimentation in the area of the visual techniques of surveillance and warfare for their employment in military managements, before their future application in the homeland and in the industrial metropolis. From watchtowers, to border controls and one-way mirror terminals, to fences and drones hovering constantly above their houses, Palestinians' activities are exposed at any moment to scrutiny by the Israeli forces, to such an extent that makes one wonder about the necessity of the construction of the Wall beyond the alleged Israeli security needs against Palestinian terrorists. Consequently, the area encapsulates different forms of visibility, the street art world on one hand and the military surveillance and visual apparatuses on the other.

Considering the street artworks as an attractive and pleasant spectacle and the visual military apparatuses as technological infrastructures of surveillance leads me to W.J. Thomas Mitchell who argues that '[S]pectacle is the ideological form of pictorial power, surveillance is its bureaucratic, managerial and disciplinary form'.⁷ Mirzoeff agrees and adds that 'the spectacle needs to be understood as being part of one structure completed by surveillance. If spectacle distracts by illusion, surveillance claims to see what is real'.⁸ This conjunction of the visual culture interwoven with street artworks and military surveillance directed my research questions into an attempt to relate supposedly irrelevant visual phenomena, such as graffiti/street art and biometric portraits and drone imagery, leading to the formulation of the following research questions:

5 N. Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, p.308

6 S. Graham, *Cities Under Siege, The New Military Urbanism*, London, New York, Verso, 2011

7 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 327

8 N. Mirzoeff, *An introduction to visual culture*, USA, Routledge, 2009, p. 267

-What are the limits and the problematics of the representation of the Palestinian plight through the usage of the street artworks?

- How the interpretation of the artwork may be altered if contextualized within the military environment? To use Mitchell's words, how much illusionary is the street art spectacle and how much real is the surveillance image?

In order to answer the research questions, this thesis is structured under three chapters. The first chapter analyses JR's street art portraiture project *Face2 Face* in comparison to the one-way mirrors in checkpoints and the biometric passports as travel documentations. What is under contestation is the significance of the image of the face as a source of subjectivity and empowerment or as a visual category of identification and classification. In the second chapter, I analyze Banksy's stencil on the West Bank Wall *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* in juxtaposition to two hacked images from Israeli drones. Contrary to popular beliefs which relate the sky viewing with freedom, what comes from above is not the emancipation and liberation of the Palestinian people but their systematic surveillance from drones. The worldwide recognizability and reproducibility of *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* juxtaposed to the illegibility of the drone imagery trigger the analysis for the illusionary and the objective nature of the spectacle and the surveillance, respectively. Finally, in the third chapter, I present the problematics of transferability and visibility (in terms of accessibility and legibility) of an artwork when transferred in exhibition galleries and museums in the Western cities. I analyze gradually three different ways of observing, through viewing (JR's and Banksy's works), through bodily experiencing (Khalled Jarrar's exhibition *Whole in the Wall*) and finally through destabilizing the split between the observer and the work to be observed (*Astro Noise* exhibition by Laura Poitras).

Empirical Material

The thesis is driven by the visual empirical material which constitute the versatile visual culture produced in Palestinian territories. These empirical materials derive from the street art and the graffiti world on one hand, and from the visualization techniques of military surveillance and management on the other. Therefore, their ostensible irrelevance triggered the overall research to explore the extent of their correlation. The material used from the street art consist of JR's portraiture project *Face2Face* and of Banksy's stencil on the West Bank Wall depicting a girl holding balloons and floating in the air; *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)*. From the perspective of the surveillance regime and the military visuality, the thesis analyses the facial pictures in biometric

passports, and two hacked images from Israeli drones which were intercepted by an intelligence operation code-named the “Anarchist”. Those images were made publicly available on the website of *The Intercept*⁹ and they had reached the hands of the filmmaker Laura Poitras. Finally, in order to investigate the ways of the accessibility to the artworks and to the images and the ways of their transferability and public visibility to the Western audience, I refer to the transfer and reproduction of JR's project in the cities of Paris and Berlin and to the reproduction and conversion of the image of Banksy's stencil in numerous sale products. My focus is put on the solo exhibition *Whole in the Wall* (2013) by the Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar, who built a wall inside a gallery in London with cement he had chiseled from the West Bank Wall, and the exhibition *Astro Noise* (2016), curated by Laura Poitras using the aforementioned intercepted images from the Israeli drones. Jarrar's exhibition highlights the dimension of the bodily experience of an artwork, while *Astro Noise* achieves to make the visitor feel repressed and surveilled, resembling the way the Palestinians-among others-do.

Methodology

Although the site-specific nature of the thesis and its locational focus (primarily on the West Bank, and on the Gaza Strip) would indicate for the indispensable need of fieldwork research and of an observation *in site*, this was not the methodology I followed. Intense uprisings in the area throughout the time of writing could not guarantee the accessibility to the empirical material, let alone the safety issues. However, the absence of fieldwork as part of my methodology aligns to the street artists' aspiration to raise awareness about the Palestinians plight without the need of someone's presence in the area but relying on their online distribution. As a result, the methodology applied for the purposes of this research consists of mixed methods of visual analysis of the images and contextual analysis driven by the theoretical framework. The visual analysis was conducted based on the visual methodologies suggested by Gillian Rose¹⁰ and the division of the analysis of an image to four components: the site of production, the site of the audience, the site of distribution and the site of the image itself.

After having analyzed the visual empirical material, and having compartmentalized the images into their basic features, I proceeded to a comparison and to a -as symmetrical as possible -juxtaposition between the images that derive from the street art world (JR and Banksy) and the

9 C. Currier and H. Moltke, *Anarchist Snapshots, Hacked Images from Israel's Drone Fleet*, The Intercept, 2016 <https://theintercept.com/2016/01/28/hacked-images-from-israels-drone-fleet/>. (Accessed 20 June 2018).

10 G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London, Sage, 2001.

imagery of the military surveillance regime (facial biometrics and drones). This comparison was an attempt to ground on concrete empirical material Mitchell's argument on the convergence between spectacle and surveillance. Finally, I researched the transfigurations occurred when these images and artworks were transferred and exhibited in galleries, observing the displacements between the site of production (Palestinian territories) and the site of distribution (galleries in USA and Europe).

Theoretical Framework

The initial inspiration and conception of the research questions of this thesis were entirely based on Mitchell's and Mirzoeff's theory and agreement on the convergence and supplementation of the spectacle relations with the surveillance regime. The theoretical template for this thesis uses the critique of the spectacle by Guy Debord¹¹ and refers very often to the essay written by Walter Benjamin¹² concerning the mechanical reproducibility of an artwork. The critique of the spectacle is further enhanced by the findings of the professor Ulrich Blanché¹³ in his research about Banksy as a consumer phenomenon.

Regarding the literature from the aspect of the military surveillance, the research by the architect and professor Eyal Weizman¹⁴ offers crucial insights on how the situation in the West Bank cities and in Gaza is architectonically and visually structured. Additionally, for the analysis on the facial biometrics I follow the work conducted by the professor Kelly Gates¹⁵ and for the analysis of the drone imagery I focus on the theory produced by the professor Stephen Graham^{16 17} regarding the doctrine of the new military urbanism and on the nascent stratification of our societies and cultures in a vertical order.

In the last chapter, I aim to apply Miwon Kwon's theoretical model¹⁸ on the transferability of an artwork, and on its criticality dependent on the destabilized notion of site-specificity. Lastly, Foucault's theoretical apparatuses have been used in the first chapter regarding the subject (visualized in the image of the face) and the power relations embedded on the notion of

11 G. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, London, Rebel Press, 1994.

12 W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, in M.W. Jennings, B. Doherty, T.Y. Levin (ed.) *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings*, Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008.

13 U. Blanché, *Banksy. Urban Art in a Material World*, Tectum Verlag, Marburg, 2016,

14 E. Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, London New York, Verso, 2007

15 K. Gates, *Our Biometric Future, Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance*, New York, New York University Press, 2011, p.46

16 S. Graham, *Cities Under Siege, The New Military Urbanism*, London, New York, Verso, 2011

17 S. Graham, *Vertical, The City from Satellites to Bunkers*, London, New York, Verso, 2016

18 M. Kwon, *One place after another, Site-specific art and Locational Identity*, England, The MIT Press, 2002

subjectivity¹⁹. And the third chapter concludes with an explanation of the notion of the colonial boomerang effect coined by him²⁰.

Previous Research

The scholars Julie Peteet²¹ and Amahl Bishara²² have provided the academic literature with thorough insights regarding the Palestinian graffiti during the Intifada periods and the analysis of the street art messages on the West Bank Wall. Additionally, the research conducted by the scholar Kurt Iveson²³ even though it refers primarily to the Western urban environments, inspired my attempt to approach the issue of the street art within the military surrounding in the Palestinian context. Finally, Hoppe's²⁴ work on the correlation between urban creativity and military urbanism led me to Mirzoeff's theoretical apparatus. While Mirzoeff highlights the convergence of the spectacle with the surveillance regime presumably in the industrial societies, with this thesis I aim to supplement and contribute to his argumentation, with concrete empirical material and their analytical correlation outside the Western context, situated in the Israeli-Palestinian area.

Background

The following chapter consists of a very brief synopsis of the basic information and the milestone dates regarding the longstanding conflict in the Palestinian territories. This chronological outline²⁵ will provide or remind information that might be taken for granted and enable to situate the overall thesis within the factual context in historical and geopolitical terms. In the beginning of the 20th century, both what is now known (but not officially and internationally declared) as Palestinian and Israeli territories were under British colonial control, partaking in the geopolitical entity of the British Mandate for Palestine. Frictions between two major nationalisms in the area, among the Jews and the Arabs, culminated in the civil war of the 1947-1948. The aftermath of the war, on

19 M. Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1982

20 M. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1976-6*, England, Penguin, 2003, p.103.

21 J. Peteet, 'Wall Talk', *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, London, New York, Routledge, 2016

22 A. Bishara, 'New Media and Political Change: The case of the two Palestinian Intifadas', EUI Working Paper Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Mediterranean Programme, 2009

23 K. Iveson, 'The wars on graffiti and the new military urbanism', *City*, vol. 14, no. 1-2, 2010

24 I. Hoppe, 'Urban Art as Counter-visibility', p. 260-265

25 *Palestinian Territories-Timeline*, BBC News, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29362505> (accessed August 2018).

1948, led to the establishment and the declaration of the state of Israel. For twenty years, the tensions between Israel and its neighboring states of Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, resulted in the Six Days War in June of the 1967. Israel with its military success managed to confiscate the West Bank from Jordan, the Gaza strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, as well as the Golan heights from Syria. Numerous of Syrians and Palestinians were forced to flee their hometowns and to migrate in refugee camps. The massive displacement of Arab populations resulted in their lack of citizenship for the decades to follow and their irregular permanent dispersion in the surrounding territories.

In 1987 the outbreak of the First Intifada took place in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza strip occupied by Israeli armies. Intifada was the name of the massive uprising and civil disobedience on behalf of the Palestinians against the Israeli repression and occupation. The Palestinian resistance took the form of general strikes, boycotts, barricades and political graffiti. It was a spontaneous response against the demolition of their houses, the gradual annexation of their land and of the water resources, the unjustified and arbitrary detentions and extended imprisonments, the shootings and the abuse. The conclusion of the First Intifada was sealed with the signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993. Those accords marked the beginning of an endless attempt to a peace treaty in the area. The Oslo Agreement of the 1993 recognized the right of Palestinians for self-governance and self-determination. Consequently, it led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority, which is a hybrid kind of a state formation. The agreement did not recognize the creation of a Palestinian state, but of a Palestinian Authority with limited self-governance and the primary obligation to ensure about mutual negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The second Intifada occurred between 2000 and 2005 and it is also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada because it started with the riots and violent episodes in the mosque of Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. Ariel Sharon's (Israeli general and prime minister at that time) visit in the holy site of this mosque triggered Palestinians, who perceived it as a highly provocative action. The ending of the second Intifada was achieved by 2005 with an agreement of ceasefire between the Palestinian President Abbas and the Israeli Prime Minister Sharon. In the meantime, the emerging act of attacking with suicide bombs was becoming a very popular method for the Palestinian arsenal. The indiscriminate killing of civilians right after having detonated improvised explosives attached onto the attacker's clothing, was carried out for the first time in the area in 1989. During the second Intifada, suicide bombing attacks multiplied, and they marked the transfer of the warfare operations within the civil society and the urban environments.

In 2002 the construction of the West Bank Wall began by Israeli Authorities. The purposes of

this border artifact vary depending the political interpretations. From security issues and prevention of the suicide bombers from entering the Israeli land, to Israeli settlement interests and confiscation of the Palestinian land. According to Ray Dolphin, the Wall at points follows a circuitous course, resulting to an imprisonment and isolation of areas and residents, or leaving 'potential assailants in the Israeli side of the route'.²⁶ The United Nations have declared the Wall illegal, while many street art and graffiti artists have used it as a canvas to raise awareness for the Palestinian suffering and struggle for self-governance. Israel has its borders officially declared and demarcated only in relation to the neighboring countries of Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. When it comes to the West Bank, there are no officially internationally declared borders, which is partly an alleged reason that enables the Israeli settlement activities.

At the time of writing (2018), the Wall still exists, despite many humanitarian and legal campaigns against it. Lastly, many analysts have been talking about the anticipation of a third Intifada due to the moving of the American Embassy from Tel-Aviv (the capital of Israel) to the fragmentarily occupied city of Jerusalem. The transfer of the embassy in 2018 implied the American recognition of the contested territory of Jerusalem as Israeli land and thus, it raised the Palestinians' infuriation. To conclude with, a systematic scholarly engagement with a topic regarding the area might coincide with an intense period of uprisings, bringing new challenges, empirical material, limits or renegotiations on how to approach academically a longstanding unresolved situation.

26 R. Dolphin, *The West Bank Wall, Unmaking Palestine*, London, Pluto Press, 2006, p.10

Delimitations

Although there has been a systematic academic debate about the delimitations and the definitions between street art and graffiti, I very often use these two terms interchangeably. With the acknowledgement that graffiti might arguably be as old as the written world, I consider street art as a broader urban activity that could encompass graffiti. In the second chapter of this thesis I return to this grey area of delimitations between these two terms in order to highlight the difficulty to categorize Banksy's stencils in the West Bank. Additionally, regarding the doctrine of the new military urbanism, military visualization technologies mounted in drones do not enable only the surveillance techniques but also, in doing so, they provide visual data for operators to proceed to airstrikes, preemptive attacks or policing through firing teargas canisters.

Moreover, the thesis is mainly focused on the area of the West Bank, but sometimes uses examples of the situation in the Gaza strip. When doing so, it is under the awareness of the very different sociopolitical situation which exists between these two areas. Although the isolated Gaza strip still partakes in the constellation of the contested Palestinian territories, it has different challenges and needs to be met, compared to the less conflict-zone situation in some advancing cities of the West Bank. Finally, it was only until I saw a picture of a biometric passport with the words of the '*State of Palestine*' that I started using the term *Palestine* in this essay, instead of *Palestinian territories* or *Palestinian Authority*. However, I kept on referring to the area as *Palestinian territories* in order to highlight the dispersed and discontinuous land of the Palestinian cities.

Ethical Considerations

My engagement with this topic does not spring from any personal individual interest or identity. Having neither Palestinian nor Israeli origins, neither Arabic nor Jew nurturing, my choice to research systematically a case which refers to the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict, gradually raised questions about my political standpoint. Inevitably a scholar's political beliefs might influence one's academic interests, however, in that case there are numerous challenges to be met for a proper scientific and unbiased outcome to be achieved. My inmost desire is to accomplish a solid critical argumentation against the expanding entrapment in the spectacle relations and against the state of repression and segregation in the areas of interest. In this attempt, I try to use exclusively academic tools from the corpus of the visual culture theory and abandon any politically

burdened and ideological approaches. The struggle for self-determination and self-governance of the Palestinian people although is successfully channeled through the street art in the area, at the same time it is questioned anew due to the technological surveillance and military visualized techniques. Without the slightest intention to derogate Palestinians' suffering, I wanted to point that it is the same techniques and technologies expanding and implemented in all kinds of societies, establishing a regime of surveillance and discipline, embellished with spectacular images.

Lastly, part of my empirical material consists of images of Israeli drones intercepted by hacking intelligence operations. Only as long as they were made publicly available on online sites and in gallery exhibition, did I consider them as solid empirical material to use and include in my research. Their authenticity and credibility could be questioned if it weren't for them being publicly accessible, even though, to my knowledge, there still hasn't been any public official comment about those images on behalf of the Israeli authorities.

Chapter 1: Street art portraiture and Facial biometric identification

Abstract

In the following chapter I analyze the street art project *Face2Face* created in Israeli and Palestinian territories by the French artist JR. I focus on the specific feature of portraiture that JR uses and renders his artwork engaging and participatory. The playful and childish dimension attached in the grimaces in the portraits contradict with the average media representation of the area's conflict. However, they bear evidence of the estrangement in front of the camera lens. Drawing on JR's intention to put the two people face to face, I contemplate on the one-way mirror checkpoints and the terminals' identification processes. The use of biometrics and facial recognition, as categories of urban surveillance have been recently implemented in the area. The significance of the face appears to be crucial for both urban creativity (street art) and military urbanism (biometric passports), for they use the visual motif of the face as a meeting point or as a borderline, respectively. Therefore, the visual culture evoked in the West Bank advocates towards the convergence of spectacle and surveillance.²⁷



Figure 1: *Face2Face* Project in Palestine (2007). Picture ©JR and Marco.

²⁷ N. Mirzoeff, *An introduction to visual culture*, p. 267.

JR's project 'Face2Face'

One of the most famous street artworks on the West Bank Wall and in the urban places surrounding is created by the French artist JR. The project *Face2Face* was created in 2006/2007 in Palestinian and Israeli territories and it was part of the overall project entitled *28mm*, produced between 2004 and 2010. *Face2Face* consists of 41 big sized portraits of local people, printed in black and white weatherproof texture and pasted-up on unavoidable spots of the cities' traffic and flow. The people who were photographed with a camera lens of 28mm, were both men and women of all ages and were asked to take a comical facial expression; a humorous grimace. The goal, according to JR, is to visually juxtapose one portrait of an Israeli and one of a Palestinian and evoke the audience to recognize who is from where, what are the differences or the similarities.²⁸ The criterion which JR and his crew employed to decide who to put next to whom was the profession. The result was 19 pairs of black and white portraits depicting actors, taxi drivers, professors, athletes of both Palestinian and Israeli side. The only case where there were more than two pictures paralleled was the so called *Holy Triptych*. This is a compilation of three portraits of the representatives of the three religions which are practiced in the area, Islam, Judaism and Christianity. However, it is the only picture of portraits where the distinctive signs of the different religions are distinguishable. For example, there is no Arab woman pictured with her hijab or a man with the characteristic Jewish braids, payot. The picture of a Christian Priest next to a Rabbi and to an Imam is the most recognizable outcome of this project and has been transferred, reproduced and pasted in many Western metropolis.

JR was in charge of taking the photos with the aid of Marco who did the interviews. They travelled together back from France having printed and prepared their material. With 70 boxes of powdered glue and 1.500 square metres of posters they head to Palestinian and Israeli cities to start the paste up. They used the concrete of the West Bank Wall as canvas to paste on and visited eight Palestinian and Israeli cities and villages (e.g. Abu Dis, Jerusalem, Hebron, Ramallah). *Face2Face* would not have been fulfilled if it wasn't for the locals' active participation and help. Their consent to get photographed, their permission to use walls of their property to paste up on, their recommendations for available spots, their offer to translate and to interfere with the Israeli soldiers and their interrogation, has proven to be indispensable. Therefore, *Face2Face* project is one telling example, among others, of the urban creativity in the form of street art produced in the area. Following JR's statement and purpose of the project, those street art installations intended to bring together Israelis and Palestinians, to 'put them face to face'²⁹ and restore the image they had built one for another through the media representations and political propaganda.

28 M. Berrebi, *JR 28 mm*, Paris, Editions Alternatives, 2011, p.89.

29 M. Berrebi, *JR 28 mm*, p.89.

Visual Analysis of a pair of portraits of two lawyers

Proceeding to a visual analysis of *Face2Face*, I will put primarily my focus on the pair of portraits of the lawyers pasted on the Palestinian side of the Wall in the city of Bethlehem.³⁰ In doing so, my attempt is to highlight the inherent political dimension of the project because of its site-specificity. This street art installation pasted on politically charged places, such as separation barriers and watchtowers, offers a lighthearted, more humane, playful and facetious perspective compared to the average media representation of the conflict zone. Instead of trying to measure any gap between political claims in the form of graffiti writing and pictorial supposedly apolitical utterances of street art, I follow Thierry Noir's argument for the Berlin Wall.³¹ 'Everything you do on the wall is immediately political. Even if you just pee-pee on the wall, it is a political act'.³² The aforementioned reasons explain my choice to analyze specifically the two portraits of two lawyers, pasted on a military watchtower embedded in the West Bank Wall. This analysis will enable me to research the extent of convergence between the spectacle of street art and the visual regime of surveillance as modes of representing and as optical instruments of controlling the Palestinian crisis, respectively.

The two black and white portraits depict the Palestinian lawyer named Jad and his Israeli colleague named Dagi. Jad's portrait was taken by the lower right-side corner while Dagi's one was shot by the lower left side. Jad uses his hands to change the shape of his face and provoke some facial expressions. His two hands cover the bigger part of his portrait and alter the symmetry between his eyebrows and his nose. His mouth is almost unnoticed. With his fingers he stretches his eye-lids and provokes a gaze of amazement. His wrinkled forehead gives an allusion of despair or confusion. On the other hand, Dagi's face gives a more cheerful and smiley mood. Her facial features are being distorted because of the length of the lens during the shooting and her chin goes beyond the frame of the portrait.³³ Her smiling wide mouth with the big white teeth predominates the picture and lies in contrast with her overshadowed, looking down, eyes. Her intimidating big grin gives a feeling of estrangement. It appears as if those two portraits function in a supplementary way to one another. Her broad smile balances his tiny lips while his stretched eyes compensate for the almost shut eyes of hers. However, his portrait is composed by a deliberate artificial facial alteration provoked by the gesture of his hands, while her portrayed facial distortion is a result of technological means of production, (i.e. the 28mm camera lens) combined with the lower side of capture.

30 See Appendix Figure 1.1

31 Thierry Noir is a French artist who is claimed to be the first artist who painted the Berlin Wall.

32 Interview with Thierry Noir in *Interview: Thierry Noir*, Street art London, 2013, <http://streetartlondon.co.uk/blog/2013/02/28/interview-thierry-noir/> (accessed 25 February 2018).

33 R. Godfried, 'What Images Can Do', Master Thesis, Utrecht University, 2014, p.94.

Regarding the technological means of production, the choice of a 28mm lens, instead of one with a normal focal length of 50mm is very indicative of both the final visual outcome of the portraits and of the procedure of photographing. This technological modality of the 28mm length is a wide-angle length that is primarily used for shooting landscapes, since it enlarges the field of view. To represent something in a clear way in the 28mm frame, one has to get really close to the object. Consequently, JR describes that he had to stand in a 10cm distance from the person being photographed and that he could sense his breathing.³⁴ A picture shot with a 28mm might consist of distorted perspectives in the corners and the represented images can easily go out of proportion. The humorous approach of the project was enhanced by JR's encouragement towards the people being photographed to make funny grimaces. And the comical slightly distorted content was technically achieved with the use of a 28mm lens.

The physical proximity demanded to take close-up portraits creates a meeting point with the photographer and sheds light in the collaborative and participatory working environment of the project. JR's main concern was to process the framing according to the gaze and the eyes to intensify the possibility of an encounter between Israelis and Palestinians viewers and pedestrians, allowing them to define by themselves the content of this exchange.³⁵ The active engagement of the locals, the interaction with them and the raising of their subjectivity are some of the reasons for the positive impact of those street art installations, especially when compared by some critics to the stencil artworks of the elusive Banksy. However, the exaggeration in the facial zoom-in misses out the sociopolitical context. The display of verbal descriptions in the form of captions in the lower right corner of the poster includes the name of the person and the place of origin. This is the only sign for the beholder to construct a meaning. However, I argue that the restoration of subjectivity, which JR managed to capture, occurs at the expense of the contextualization within the sociopolitical climate. Therefore, it attenuates the potential of a sharp political impact, which was not part of JR's intention at the first place.

This lack of reference to the sociopolitical conditions of the area is something that has been also highlighted by Julie Peteet (2016) and Amhal Bishara (2009). The graffiti practice that once used to carry messages of Palestinian resistance and calls for radicalization, when it transferred on the Wall it converted into a street art world produced by foreigners and for an international audience.³⁶ The problem that has emerged is that many artworks and murals are occupying public space that allegedly should be in use for internal Palestinian discussions.³⁷ Bishara deployed a very harsh critique against *Face2Face* project arguing that JR derogated and oversimplified the

34 M. Berrebi, *JR 28 mm*, p.138.

35 M. Berrebi, p. 139.

36 J. Peteet, 'Wall Talk', p. 336.

37 A. Bishara, 'New Media and Political Change: The case of the two Palestinian Intifadas', p. 14.

significance of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in a simple call for a fair conversation. 'This view resonates with some visions of a liberal public space in which open communication will lead to rational decisions'³⁸ and it deliberately overlooks the plethora of power structures and institutions that are designed to keep those two people apart. JR's standpoint is from outside and not situated within the sociopolitical context of the area. This advocates to a kind of interventionism that suits the postcolonial gaze of the project which is also confirmed by JR's choice of words when describing his intentions, '*put them face to face*'.³⁹

The mirror holder

JR, whose two-letter moniker signifies his initials but is unwilling to say what they stand for, appears publicly very often (e.g. in documentaries, in work progress, in award ceremonies). However he always keeps his eyes hidden behind sunglasses.⁴⁰ In his artistic task to restore the identities of the nameless, he prefers to remain faceless and unrecognizable. In an article in *The Guardian*, he explicitly claims that 'everything is about eye contact', a statement testified by his other artistic projects as well.⁴¹ ⁴² His artistic principles illustrate his awareness of the importance of the eye and the iris. However, they seem to contradict with his personal behavior and lead to the construction of an asymmetrical relation among the photographer (JR), the photographed (the local community) and the beholder (the audience). Considering it as a token of the graffiti culture, this strive for anonymity and the use of pseudonym has enabled street artists to escape troubles with security issues and to move, travel and exhibit unnoticed.

Besides the aforementioned reasons where JR manages to remain faceless compared to the models he uses for his street art portraits, I argue that there is more reasons to believe that his 'mirroring' (face-to-face) project has distorted effects. The use of the criterion of the profession as a way to juxtapose two persons and further to connect two people in the state of constant conflict did not prove to be secure and applicable in any circumstances. Based on JR and Marco's interviews carried in Tel Aviv, an interviewee of unconfirmed identification, inside an Apple store explains why he/she thinks that the project will fail, since there was no Apple store in Palestine, not at least at the time when *Face2Face* was carried out.⁴³ Therefore there is not always a corresponding

38 A. Bishara, 'New Media and Political Change: The case of the two Palestinian Intifadas', p.13.

39 M. Berrebi, p. 89, [my emphasis]

40 The editor of the video documentary *FACE2FACE/ARTE Metropolis*, blurs JR's eyes because they were visible from the angle of the camera shot. (min 3.35). *FACE2FACE/ARTE Metropolis*, Youtube, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFrVnjtQLxg&t=332s&frags=pl%2Cwn> (accessed 20 August 2018)

41 E. Day, *The street art of JR*, The Guardian, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/mar/07/street-art-jr-photography> (accessed 10 February 2018).

42 See photo book of JR and Marco Berrebi, *JR 28mm*.

43 M. Berrebi, *JR 28mm*, p. 138-139

equivalence in all kind of professions between Israeli and Palestinian population. This lack of the specific store in the Palestinian cities is a telling example of the growing gap in the economies of the two states (Palestinian Authority and Israel).

In his photo book, the photojournalist William Parry describes the gradual and inescapable impoverishment that the majority of Palestinian people suffer because of the Israeli military managements. His pictures document people sleeping on cartons in the dawn outside the checkpoints of the West Bank Wall in order to vindicate and reach a better place in the queue with the turnstiles, and be able to make it on time for their work.⁴⁴ The checkpoint remains open for only two hours in the morning and another two in the evening. Some other of Parry's pictures depict landscapes, originally Palestinian fields, with abandoned crops and soil being the current evidence of no man's land.⁴⁵ Since the Wall hinders the access to their fields and the owners are not allowed to enter their agricultural property without special permission, an important sector of the Palestinian economy is in decline irreversibly. Therefore, I assume that within the sociological triptych of gender, race and class, JR undoubtedly situates himself closer to narratives that unify and classify people according to class. His perspective, probably emanating by the capitalist European culture, comes in contrast with William Parry's experience. Parry's visual documentation and verbal description contradict the playfulness and the childishness of JR's portraits, whose center of narrative is around mainly middle-class people. (e.g. Lawyers, actors, professors).

JR's intention is not to imitate reality but to overcome it through art. The participatory property of his artistic project, essentially based on locals' engagement opens the way to a unifying activity and was reportedly greeted with a lot of success. This embracement -in terms of reception- strengthens the hypothesis that the Israel-Palestinian conflict and incessant friction mainly springs from governmental and military policies and political organizations and does not necessarily inhabit in people's mindset of either side. This interpretation converges the outcome of the research conducted by the professor Stephen Oldberg. The results of 15 semi-structured interviews with students, aged between 25 and 35 years old, of both the Hebrew and the Bethlehem university, who were asked to comment upon several graffiti artworks of the Wall, were very concordant in terms of the need for reconciliation and for dialogue for a solution to peace.⁴⁶ Therefore, I believe that street art comes to blur social delimitations which military governance try to manage through classification and separation. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on the visual motif of the face/portraiture that is reproduced both in the artistic appropriation of the Wall, as in the case of JR's project, and in the surveillance culture, partly reified by the border checkpoints.

44 W.Parry, *Against the Wall, The Art of Resistance in Palestine*, England, Pluto Press, 2010, p. 90

45 W.Parry, *Against the Wall, The Art of Resistance in Palestine*, p. 38-40

46 S.Oldberg, *Political Graffiti on the West Bank Wall in Israel/Palestine*, USA, Edwin Mellen Press, 2012. p. 111-135

Portraits and Apparatuses

JR's choice to name his overall street art installation project *28mm*, part of which is the *Face2Face* amounts to the significance of the apparatus used and to the technological perspective. In his project *Portrait of a Generation* created previously (2004-2006) than the Palestinian one, he took portraits of young people living in the suburbs of Paris. At that time they were on the edge of insurrection, also known as the French Riots of 2005. The two projects share a lot of similarities and the principal idea behind is the same; to convert portraits into posters and paste up the city. However, the facial expressions and the gaze appear much more violent or cruel in the French project rather than in the Palestinian one. An iconic picture of the *Portrait of a Generation* depicts a young black man standing threatened in front of the camera holding in his hand something that could be misinterpreted for a gun but is in fact an old camera device.⁴⁷ The way he points and targets JR's lens with his camera, his gesture and his expression bear evidence to an awareness of the empowering quality of the camera as an apparatus. Additionally, I instigate that this picture manages to illustrate the correlation between *shooting* and *shooting a photograph*, as both instantaneous actions that capture time and can be used to define historical time.

Unlike the *Portrait of Generation*, in the *Face2Face* project there is a playful and a silly dimension judging by the grins in the portraits. A participant of the project characterized it as ridiculous just like the Wall itself.⁴⁸ The humorous facial gestures, despite JR's encouragement, resonates the feeling of embarrassment and estrangement in front of the camera. Walter Benjamin in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* argues about the film actors that:

[the] estrangement in the face of the apparatus,[...], is basically of the same kind as the estrangement felt before one's appearance [*Erscheinung*] in a mirror—a favorite theme of the Romantics. But now the mirror image [*Bild*] has become detachable from the person mirrored, and is transportable. And where is it transported? To a site in front of the masses.[...] While he stands before the apparatus, he knows that in the end he is confronting the masses. It is they who will control him. Those who are not visible, not present while he executes his performance, are precisely the ones who will control it. This invisibility heightens the authority of their control.⁴⁹

47 See Appendix Figure 1.2

48 Documentary *Face2Face /ARTE Metropolis*, Youtube, min 8.36 (accessed January 2018).

49 W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, p.33.

Applying Benjamin's quote on the case of the *Face2Face* project, there is an apparent similarity to the estrangement which the participants felt in front of the 28mm camera and their aftermath exposure to the masses when pasted up on the walls. The absence, and thus the invisibility of the masses, during the time of the shooting increases the power of their judgement and of their control. The above argument asserts to the failure of JR's intention to function as a mere mirror and to put the two people face to face, since with the technological apparatus involved and the aftermath multiple reproduction there is a three-folded highly asymmetrical relation among the person in the portrait, the prospective beholders and the producers of the project as so called Western outsiders. With these thoughts in mind, I cannot but contemplate on the work of the Israeli architect Eyal Weizman in regard to the invisible mechanisms of control executed at checkpoints and terminals in West Bank with one-way mirror rooms where the identification process takes place.⁵⁰

Checkpoints with one-way mirror and the Split Sovereignty

According to the Oslo Agreement in 1993,⁵¹ a new architectural design had to be unfold for the border connections between Israel and Palestinian territories. The emergent Palestinian Authority had the main ambition to gradually build a state of supervised self-government and autonomy.⁵² On the other hand, Israel managed to maintain 'direct -on the ground- but invisible control and security', marking this way a shift of focus 'from occupation to management'.⁵³ The installation of 230 checkpoints between 1994 and 1999 enabled the replacement from the land occupation to the military management and the administration of the flows of the population. In the years that followed, the territories were 'no longer divided only by walls and checkpoints, but subject to a three-dimensional system of separation of which walls are only one element [...]Bridges and interchanges were built to separate the two levels, with Israelis traveling on the fast upper level and the Palestinian on the lower one'.⁵⁴

Israeli authorities have managed to rule the movement of the Palestinian flows and the imposition of border controls in the arrivals and the departures of Palestinian travelers has become a daily routine to suffer. The nascent self-governed state of the Palestinian Authority by 1995 was allowed to issue passports. At the same time, the Israeli Authorities would issue limited number of travel permits with a short validity time to Palestinian residents of very contested regions, such as

50 E. Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, 2007

51 See also in Introduction the section for the Background Information.

52 E. Weizman, p.142

53 E. Weizman, p.143

54 Y. Lerer , 'Crossing Walls' in O. Snaije and M. Albert (ed.) *Keep your eye on the Wall: Palestinian Landscapes*, London, Saqi Books, 2013

Jerusalem. However, the conditions under which a Palestinian could be eligible to obtain a passport or safe travel documentation are still very vague, arbitrary and temporary.

The architect and professor Eyal Weizman describes very thoroughly the example of the Allenby Bridge checkpoint in regard to the optical medium of the one-way mirrored rooms. The terminal of Allenby Bridge is situated between the West Bank and the Israeli controlled bank of the Jordan river, very close to the city of Jericho. Since it functions as the main connection between West Bank and Jordan, a lot of Palestinian passengers must use this terminal and enter the West Bank. Inside the terminal, incoming Palestinians would be confronted with Palestinian flags and Palestinian officers and policemen would stand on duty. The rooms where the identification control would take place were partly glazed with one-way mirrors. The incoming passengers would encounter a Palestinian officer. However, 'the one-way mirrors were positioned so that the Israeli security behind them could observe, unseen not only the passengers but also the Palestinian personnel themselves'.⁵⁵ The effect of supervision and the optical illusion of self-government, achieved with the one-way mirror, asserts to the tactic of surveillance deployed in the West Bank by Israeli authorities. 'Here, power should be neither visible nor verifiable [...]to make them (the Palestinians) believe that they are under the control of one authority, whereas they are in fact under the control of another'.⁵⁶

With a newly emergent Palestinian Authority and the one-way mirror checkpoints, as the one described in the Allenby Bridge, the Palestinians can be misled and encouraged that they are the political subjects of their own state but in fact they remain 'individual *objects* exposed to military power'.⁵⁷ Following Weizman's interpretation, the coexistence of the Palestinian authorities under the supervision of Israeli army consist the basic components of the vertically layered split sovereignty in the area. The illusion of political subjectivity of the Palestinians can ensure for the continuation of an invisible and unverifiable state of control and surveillance by the Israeli army. Moreover, I would like to supplement Weizman's interpretation on the vertical split sovereignty, using Foucault's theory on the power relations and the notion of subjectivity. According to him, 'power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free[...]. Consequently, there is no face-to-face confrontations of power and freedom, which are mutually exclusive[...], but a much more complicated interplay'.⁵⁸ Applying the quote in the case, the Palestinians' illusion of political subjectivity and self-governance opposes to the reality described in the border checkpoints. While the hybrid state form of Palestinian Authority ensues about the Israeli security and control on Palestinian grounds, without putting Israel in further juridicial risks with international laws. The

55 E. Weizman, p.140

56 E. Weizman, p.141

57 E. Weizman, p. 145, italics in the original

58 M. Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', p. 790

management, and not the occupation, of the Palestinian territories by Israeli forces is what enables tacitly the reproduction of the power relations exercised in the area.

Having said that, my intention is to bring in surface the limits of JR's ambition to restore Palestinian's subjectivity and to spread an empowering message through his street art portraiture. The surrounding reality of the area does not give much chance for the artworks/ artist to achieve their goal. Putting the two people face to face, the mirroring project which JR attempted, cannot occur in a transparent and equal way but behind glazed one-way mirrors, as shown in the case of Allenby Bridge Terminal. However, the significance and the uniqueness of the image of the face, the portrait, is highlighted in both the street artworks and in the travel documents or identity cards. In the following paragraphs, I will develop a short approach on the importance of the facial picture and the consequent implementation of biometric technologies in the border controls.

Biometric Passports

With point of departure JR's street art portraits and the expansive plight of checkpoints and travel permits in the area of West Bank, I contemplate on the correlation between biometric facial identification documents and the authorities' control. Facial biometric identification is a highly political and intense issue which is technologically advanced and implemented in border controls. My ambition is to argue that the visible street art upsurge in the West Bank area overshadows the invisible technologies of control and surveillance that are taking place in the same area. What is highlighted, both in JR's project and border identity control, is the self-evident emergence of the significance of the face as a place of empowerment and subjectivity, on one hand, and as a mapping category of the securitization of identity, on the other.

Although 'facial images had been used[...] since the late nineteenth century as[...] markers of individual identities pasted to documents and integrated within larger bureaucratic ensembles',⁵⁹ I focus my research exclusively on the facial documentation used for traveling purposes, and migration, since it is more suitable to correlate with the plight in the West Bank and the indispensability of travel permits and identity documents. The passports issued by the Palestinian Authority have implemented the biometric technologies by 2016, complying with the international regulations.⁶⁰ However, not all Palestinians are eligible for a passport, either because they lack of all the demanded pre-required documentation, either because they don't foresee the need of possessing

59 K. Gates, *Our Biometric Future, Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance*, p.46

60 PA: 'State of Palestine to Replace 'Palestinian Authority' on New Passports', The Palestine Chronicle, 2016, <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/pa-state-of-palestine-to-replace-palestinian-authority-on-new-passports/>.

(Accessed August 2018).

one or they cannot afford it at the first place. In fact, in many cases, Palestinians refugees living in camps in neighboring countries (e.g. Lebanon) prefer to maintain their refugee status, in order to keep their right of return to their homeland. The maintenance of the refugee status deprives them of the pre-required documentation for a Palestinian passport.

The border checkpoints with the countries in vicinity are computerized and function under Israeli control and security. Therefore, the biometric passport is necessary for entering or exiting from the West Bank to the other country. Like in all biometric passports or driving licenses, the card includes a microchip to be scanned and a facial photography of the user that is taken according to the biometric features. In this endeavor to research the correlation of the facial recognition technologies compared to JR's portraiture, I will elaborate on the following three issues: firstly the specific photo requirements for biometric passports, secondly the face as a major component of the biometric technology and thirdly the face as a frontier or as a city.

The difference between a biometric or a digital passport from a 'traditional' one is that the former 'has an embedded electronic chip which contains biometric information that can be used to authenticate the identity of passport holder[...]using contactless smart technology[...]The passport's critical information is both printed on the data page of the passport and stored in the chip'.^{61 62} The photographic portrait depicting the passport holder must be taken under certain requirements, in order to be considered as valid and legible from the databases software and these rules are internationally applied. First of all, the lighting and the illumination, as well as the sharpness and the contrast must reflect the subject's skin tone correctly. Secondly, there must be no background in the picture, and the head must be positioned straight up, without any facial expression and with the eyes open looking to the camera. In case of a hat or a head covering, it is allowed only for religious purpose and as long as it does not obscure the hair or the hairline nor does it cast any shadows on the face.⁶³ Finally, the eyeglasses are not allowed except only for medical reasons.⁶⁴

61 'Biometric passport' in *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, August 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biometric_passport#cite_note-1 (accessed August 2018)

62 See Appendix Figure 1.3

63 *Photo Requirements, Travel.State.Gov. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular affairs*, Available at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html> (accessed April 2018)

64 *Passport> How Do I Make a Biometric Passport Photo ? Persofoto*, Available at <https://www.persofoto.com/lexicon/passport/how-do-i-make-a-biometric-passport-photo/> , (accessed April 2018).

Why the Face ?

Having outlined the basic characteristics that can constitute a photographic portrait valid for a biometric passport, I will proceed to the reasons that explain why the face has become such a popular, innovative and efficient feature for the biometric technology. The biometric (from Greek *bios*, and *metron*, measurement)⁶⁵ technologies have been implemented in most of the border security controls and constitute a telling example of the body becoming 'a site of multiple encoded boundaries'.⁶⁶ The signature, the hand geometry, the fingerprint, the iris scanning, the voice or the gait recognition are some of the examples which testify that individual identity can be anchored to the bodily traits. 'Biometric identifiers have historically been central to the governing of mobility',⁶⁷ and the targeting of body parts that are unique to each individual is a technology that has been used since the 1980's.⁶⁸ However, according to Gates there are crucial advantages that escort the use of facial recognition technologies and have rendered this method as the most popular and the most infallible. They are suitable for identification and not for verification applications, meaning that they can identify a person and not just verify someone among other suggested options. Additionally, they are neither invasive nor obtrusive, and they don't make individuals feel uncomfortable. The gradual shift from the print-ink analog portraits to the digital databases of facial imagery has crucially enabled the expansion of their use.

The biometric technology of facial recognition relies on the iconic connection between portraits and their subjects and is embedded into more standardized bureaucratic procedures for the authentication of specific identities.⁶⁹ When this connection is contextualized within the societies of risk, securitization and migration, biometrics ostensibly can be the only way to identify a terrorist, an immigrant or an asylum seeker. When the borders consist of vague contested lines, and the enemy or the threat is unclear, 'biometrics emerge with its technological accuracy'.⁷⁰ Beyond permission or refusal of entry, the biometric control is much about user profiling. However, as it has been supported from the standpoint of cultural studies 'identification is not reducible to identity and[...] there is an ever-present gap between identity and identification'⁷¹; an omnipresent incompleteness of the subject, that is only momentarily performed. There is an openness in the interpretation of the subject in regard to the notion of power which can render the individual both

65 M. Liljefors and L. Morrison, 'Mapped Bodies: Notes in the use of Biometrics in Geopolitical Contexts', in A. Michelsen F. Trygstrup (ed.) *Socioaesthetics. Ambience – Imaginary*, vol. 19, Sweden, Brill Academic Publishers, 2015, p.53

66 L. Amoore, 'Biometric borders: Governing mobilities in the war on terror', *Political Geography*, vol. 25, 2006, p. 341.

67 L. Amoore, 'Biometric borders: Governing mobilities in the war on terror', p.341

68 K. Gates, p.45

69 K. Gates, p.46

70 M.Liljefors and L. Morisson, 'Mapped Bodies: Notes in the use of Biometrics in Geopolitical Contexts', p. 68

71 L. Amoore, p.344

an empowering subject and a suffering object. Therefore, secure conclusions about identity, and not identification, can be drawn only when situated in specific circumstances.

In the case of the West Bank, there are more than 230 checkpoints to regulate the flow of the Palestinians,⁷² and the permanent checkpoints are equipped with biometric reading infrastructures, while the random checkpoints that can pop-up anywhere on one day they use only soldiers' supervision of the national identity cards and travel permits. This network of control and surveillance raises questions about the redundant nature of the concrete Wall while at the same time it offers one more tool to manage Palestinians' lives. In the military checkpoints, it is a frequent phenomenon that the Israeli soldiers make random and arbitrary decisions on the permission of Palestinians' entrance. For example 'on the 6th of September 2004 [they] decided to detain every ninth adult male, on the 19th of the same month every man whose name was Mohammad was detained'.⁷³ In this way, it is apparent that the Israeli soldiers wish to maintain their human superiority and arbitrariness over the technological and governmental apparatuses, in order to make traveling for Palestinians an uncertain and discouraging experience. Therefore, this hybridization of legal and non legal authorities/activities and of human and technological apparatuses, is enhanced by the resurgence of sovereignty within the field of governmentality. The hybridization consists of the merging of the strictly juridical and technological with the personal,⁷⁴ and ultimately-as best described by Weizman- the shift from land occupation to management of the population.

For a Palestinian a biometric passport constitutes a crucial symbol of nationhood and belonging, although there are still countries (e.g. USA) that can accept it as a travel documentation but don't confer citizenship.⁷⁵ 'Biometrics is often being used in contexts where citizenship as an institutional status is at stake'.⁷⁶ In the case of a Palestinian biometric passport, although the international recognition of the state of Palestine is at stake, the possession of a biometric passport signifies the desire and the sense of belonging to that nation. The image of the face, as a 'mere index of an individual entity'⁷⁷ can have numerous applications in both interpersonal encounters and in state authorization procedures. In the era of incessant conflicts, globalization, migration and border controls, the face has replaced the border lines. The sense of a border as a single line marked in territory is becoming obsolete and instead there is a border that 'is getting inscribed in and through multiple political practices'.⁷⁸ My assumption is that the construction of the Wall in the West Bank, independently of the illegal deviation from the Green Line, wishes to compromise the traditional

72 E. Weizman, p. 143-146

73 E. Weizman, p. 147

74 L. Amoore, p.345

75 The new Palestinian passports issued after 2016 have replaced the 'Palestinian Authority' with the 'State of Palestine'.

76 M.Liljefors and L. Morisson, p. 68

77 K. Gates, p.44

78 L. Amoore, p. 344

notion of marked border lines with the novelty of the biometric technological infrastructures in the terminals and checkpoints.

Biometric databases and software programs “fueled” with digital facial images do not read or see the human face in the same way humans do. Digital facial images are stored and converted in visual data that are illegible for the human eye.⁷⁹ It is this illegibility that enables biometric algorithms and software programs (e.g. Eigenface, Fisherface) to proceed to the identification process and cope with the storage of the quantity of the visual data produced. However, it is the same human eye's imperceptibility and illegibility that questions how representative of the reality, how real is the surveillance, putting under contestation the claim of objectivity in the surveillance regime. In an attempt to reply and return to Mitchell's enquiry (as discussed in the Introduction Chapter) on how illusionary is the spectacle (JR's the street art portraits) and how real is the surveillance (facial biometrics), it appears that the photographic picture of a portrait, even if it depicts a distorted human face with a grimace, is closer to what we perceive as real compared to the visual data of facial biometric images read only by algorithms and machinery. In this case, the face is perceived as an optical instrument to replace the borderlines and enhance the frontier control.

However, in the case of social encounters, the face plays a catalytic role in the interaction with the otherness and it is seen as a place for community, as a meeting point. In that sense and following the philosopher Agamben, 'the face is the only location of community, the only possible city'.⁸⁰ The face encapsulates the 'passion of revelation and the struggle for truth'⁸¹ because of its communicability and not because as any carrier of content. Read through that prism, I argue that JR's project *Face2Face* achieved in a very concise and artful way to materialize Agamben's idea of the face as the only possible city through his street art portraits. His portraits with the funny grimaces are in high contrast compared to the facial pictures in the passports. This opposition might visualize the human cheerful aspect compared to the standardized anonymous individual for the sake of technology. His ambition to promote the sense of community and to enhance a dialogue between two people in constant conflict took place through the dissemination of the faces in big paste ups all around the city walls.

Nonetheless, I contend that JR's invocation to the similarities of the facial appearance between Israelis and Palestinians is vague and void, since 'all people have basic similarities in facial appearances'.⁸² Lastly, omitting to take into consideration the plight of checkpoints and of the segregation suffered, as well as the fact that with the biometric facial recognition Palestinians -among others- are turning into 'witnesses against themselves',⁸³ JR's project is deprived of any

79 See Appendix Figure 1.4

80 G. Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p. 91.

81 G. Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, p.90

82 A. Bishara, 'New Media and Political Change: The case of the two Palestinian Intifadas', p.13

83 I.van der Ploeg, 'The illegal Body: 'Eurodac' and the politics of biometric identification' *Ethics and Information*

potential to have any sharp political impact, and is rather close to a simpleminded romantic intervention. My intention is to highlight that the visible and spectacular street art activities in the West Bank can disorient the western audience from the invisible military surveillance that occurs in the same area. The striking similarity in the optical instrument of the portraiture in the biometric passports and in the street art paste ups enables me to underscore my initial hypothesis: that the visual representation of the situation in the West Bank is arguably misleading when relies only on the street art created in the area without contextualizing it in the military surroundings.

Conclusion

In this chapter I analyzed the images of the street art portraiture created by the French artist JR in the cities of West Bank. The visual outcome was based on the facial grimaces of the residents and the portraits were printed in big textiles and pasted on the walls. I proceeded with deploying a critique towards JR's intention to be the mirror holder in between two people in incessant conflict while at the same time dropping any aspiration of politicizing his project. Although he manages to highlight the significance of the face in the process of encountering the other as a source of mutual recognition and empowerment, he omits to take into consideration the invisible and tacit power structures that have shaped the reality in the area and can modify the interpretation of his artworks.

Additionally, the description of the situation in the numerous terminals and checkpoints testifies about the daily mundane activity which many Palestinians suffer, while they show their travel permits and identification documents to Israeli authorities in one-way mirrored rooms. The implementation of biometric passports led me to research more about the facial recognition as a biometric technology practiced in Israel or in West Bank and internationally.⁸⁴ With the common denominator of the significance of the face and its visual applications, visible street art has been using the faces of Palestinians and Israelis to enhance subjectivity and political dialogue. While invisible military urbanism and the checkpoints regime are using facial biometric databases to shield undefined and mobile borders. Therefore, the face in different contexts appears as a frontier, a dividing line or as a city, a meeting point.

Technology, vol. 1, no.4, 1999, p.301

84 Although the implementation of biometric technologies in Palestinian passports started almost a decade after JR's project was created, there are still remnants of JR's portraits-posters in the area and the impact of his artwork is still taking part in the artistic and cultural discourse within Palestinian cities.

Chapter 2 : Bombing the city or 'bombing' in the city?

Abstract

In this chapter, I begin my analysis with the stencil painting *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* created by Banksy on the West Bank Wall . With the description of the particularities of the stencil technique, I argue that this image functions as a street art spectacle due to its wide redistribution and reproducibility and enhances remote solidarity for the Palestinian plight. From the spectacle of street art as remote solidarity I proceed to the remote drone warfare and surveillance. Analyzing two hacked images from Israeli drones which were intercepted by a classified operation code-named “The Anarchist”, I explore how drone footage demands for an expert visual literacy and partake in the experience and viewing of the battlefield as theater. Referencing Debord, I contemplate on the convergence of two disparate visual phenomena, the spectacle of street art and the military surveillance and using Benjamin, I situate this convergence within the visual technological advancements of mechanical and digital reproducibility.



Figure 2: *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)*, Stencil Painting by Banksy on the West Bank Wall, 2005. Picture ©William Parry.

Banksy in the West Bank

Only three years after the beginning of the construction of the Wall, in 2005, the renowned street artist Banksy entered the West Bank and created a series of paintings on the Wall right next to watchtowers and armed Israeli soldiers. A couple of years later, in 2007, he took the initiative to transfer the *Santa Ghetto* project, which had been usually held in London, to Bethlehem. Within this street art project, established members of the international street art community (e.g. Swoon, Ron English, Faile, Blu) were invited to go to the West Bank and raise global awareness for the segregation suffered by the Wall through their paintings. Therefore, it could be said that the *Santa Ghetto* initiative marked the beginning of the international street art activities on the West Bank Wall and the surrounding regions. More than a decade later, the Wall still exists, and it is growing to a touristic attraction partly due to the fame of those street artworks. Although it is not in my intentions to analyze or comment on the trajectory and the enterprising choices made by Banksy from 2016 and onwards in the area, it is important to mention the opening of the *Walled off Hotel*.⁸⁵ A hotel owned by Banksy and built in the Palestinian city of Ramallah right next to the wall, offering the 'worst view in the world' and providing the visitors with street art equipment, such as spray cans or paint brushes in order to leave their own message and their stamp on the Wall. The initial indifference or dislike by the residents towards street artworks, who claimed that they don't want the Wall to be beautiful, have been replaced by a gradual exploitation for the purposes of a revitalizing tourism.⁸⁶

JR's anonymity relies only on the two letter monikers of his name, since he still appears in public events wearing always black glasses always. However, Banksy remains unseen. Most probably, this way he aligns with the elusiveness and the anonymity of the graffiti culture and can proceed to any trespassing necessary without having to face any further legal trouble. Since he has ceased to sign his street artworks a long time ago, the only way to check the provenance and originality is to visit his original website. In the following paragraphs, I will proceed to a visual analysis of a famous stencil painting depicting a girl holding balloons created by Banksy on the Wall.

This stencil painting is a renowned and highly reproduced and redistributed street artwork concerning the West Bank Wall. Created in 2005 on the Wall in Bethlehem, it depicts a girl with a long braid holding a bunch of balloons which elevate her in the air and will enable her to overcome the hinderance of the wall. I argue that it stands as a clear connotation for the Palestinian children who have been involved in riots and protests in the area against the segregation. The girl is only a

⁸⁵ I would not disagree that the *Walled off Hotel* contributes to the rising dark tourism or else "slum tourism" in the area. However, within the scope of this thesis I don't intend to complement on that issue.

⁸⁶ Banksy, *Banksy, Wall and Piece*, London, Century, 2006, p. 142.

black pigmented figure and there are no further details to distinguish. While, the lack of any accompanying verbal elements renders the artwork very easily and quickly interpretable by an international audience. The problematics of the transnational audiences and the consequent cultural misinterpretations is something that has characterized many of Banksy's artworks in the area. Some of his sharp and controversial and intriguing messages cannot be deciphered outside the Western context and there have been cases where the Palestinians felt insulted by an artwork of his, e.g. A stencil painting depicting a rat with a catapult, because they thought that he equates them to rats combatants,⁸⁷ despite the rat being his signature symbol in the Western metropolis. This bears witness for a dubious reception of a street artwork, especially in the case of Banksy's ones, where the creator is so elusive and there is a lack for further developed explanation and support of his works.

Although, Banksy in his book does not give a title to this stencil, in several websites it is listed as the “*Balloon Girl*”.⁸⁸ Therefore, for the purposes of this essay I will use the descriptive title *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)*. In many articles it has very often been confused with *Balloon Girl*, a stencil painting created in London in 2002, depicting a young girl letting of her hand a red balloon in the shape of a heart.⁸⁹ In fact, the Palestinian stencil is a variation of the *Balloon Girl* which has been a recurrent motif throughout the years in Banksy's creations. Unlike the Palestinian stencil where the girl must grip and hang on the balloons to reach the other side of the wall, in the stencil in London the girl watches the red balloon as it distances away from her hand. Quite often on online blogs, articles and forums the stencil of the girl with the balloons on the West Bank Wall is referred as the “Balloon Debate”. According to the balloon debate, 'a number of speakers attempt to win the approval of an audience. The audience is invited to imagine that the speakers are flying in a hot-air balloon which is sinking and that someone must be thrown out if everyone is not to die'.⁹⁰ Although this title was not initially and originally given by Banksy to this piece, I believe that it encapsulates to an extent the need for larger audience to raise world-wide awareness about the Palestinian suffering. In other words, the rescue of the Palestinian children (as if they were the speakers in the hot-air balloon) depends on the wider world-wide attention and involvement.

Going beyond the audience's reception, the picture of the stencil painting *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* has become widely redistributed and recognizable. Partly this recognizability amounts to the fact that elusive Banksy was for the first time captured on a video standing on a ladder leaning against the Wall and spraying this specific stencil.⁹¹ The fact that he was filmed during the production of

87 W. Parry, *Art Against the Wall*, p. 51

88 Banksy, *Banksy, Wall and Piece*, 2006

89 See Appendix Figure 2.1

90 'Balloon debate' in *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, March 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balloon_debate (accessed August 2018)

91 See in the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umas99F_z6U (accessed 20 August 2018)

this artwork draw the Westerners' attention, who had at that time gradually encountered some of Banksy's works in their cities. Moreover, Banksy's decision to paint on the Wall surrounded by armed Israeli soldiers, promoting the street art activities in the area by international artists, was greeted by admiration and further curiosity. This intertwined relationship between the audience's attention and reception and the conditions of the production of the artwork has had a further impact on the reproduction and the redistribution of the image of the stencil.

'Bombing' in the West Bank. Graffiti or Street Art ?

Banksy's choice to use the stencil technique relies on their rapid execution on the Wall, be it for the Israeli soldiers' threat or the risk of being caught and lose his anonymity. From the perspective of the site of production of the street artwork, it is quite interesting to investigate the circumstances under which a street artwork was created in a conflict zone area or in a contested territory, such is the case of the West Bank Wall and surrounding cities. From Swoon, to Blu or JR and Lushsux, or from paste-ups to spray paints and big murals, they have all painted on the Wall, sometimes even under the eye of the soldier or on the cement of the watchtower itself. So far, the only testimony which refers to the danger encountered by the artist was made by Banksy's spokeswoman Jo Brooks. She said: 'The Israeli security forces did shoot in the air threateningly and there were quite a few guns pointed at him'.⁹²

Apparently, judging from the content of the image, if it is not too provocative and inciting to violent actions, there is a state of tolerance and safety to paint on the Wall. Comparing to the street art activities on the Berlin Wall, Jacob Kimvall argues that 'the authorities cared less about people writing on the Wall and more about the content of the writing [and] that there has been only one recorded arrest'.⁹³ In fact, based on the fieldwork research conducted by Stephen Olberg, the content of the majority of the street artworks and graffiti pieces on the West Bank Wall are not overtly political neither do they insult the Israeli Military Forces. The basic patterns of content included notions of justice, peace and freedom rather than the notions of revolution and violence.⁹⁴ Therefore, international street artists who paint on the Wall are not conceived as a threat from the Israeli side, nor as de facto allies to Palestinians' guerrilla struggle.

The quick and repeatable execution of the painting provided by the stencil technique renders the stencil a useful tool for “bombing” activities on behalf of the graffiti and street artists. The meaning

92 *Art prankster sprays Israeli wall*, BBC News, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4748063.stm> (Accessed February 2018)

93 J. Kimvall, *The G-World*, Poland, Dokument Press, 2014, p. 93.

94 S. Olberg, *Political Graffiti on the West Bank Wall in Israel/Palestine*, p. 92-100.

of the term “bombing” in the graffiti slang refers to when graffiti writers and artists draw intensively a lot of paintings, throw ups, and tag style writing in a location in a very short time. There is a striking paradox and similarity which emanates and lurks in the relation between the graffiti terminology and the military reality suffered in the West Bank and mainly in the Gaza strip, although this “bombing” term is primarily used in the context of the Western cities. According to Cedar Lewishon, 'graffiti writers are at war with the police, with the train authorities, at war with everyone. This attitude is reflected in the language of graffiti: writing graffiti is “bombing”, a tag is a “hit”, and advanced formations are “burners”'.⁹⁵ The appropriation of the militaristic language by the graffiti writers resonates the wars against graffiti and the zero tolerance policies of many cities. However, Kurt Iveson points that 'the question whether the militaristic stance adopted by some graffiti writers is in fact a *product* of the wars on graffiti, rather than pre-dating them, is a matter of conjecture'.⁹⁶ I argue that in either case of the chronicle consecution and cause relation, the use of that language is a telling example of the urban landscape as a place of contestation and political encountering. When applied in the case of the street art and graffiti in the West Bank, there is an emerging friction and contradiction. On the one hand, the content of the majority of the street artworks in West Bank functions as an international call for peace, solidarity, resilience and freedom, while the origins of the graffiti culture spring from an overtly aggression and rejection of their local society and the dominant norms.

There is an emerging contestation whether Banksy's stencil is street art or graffiti. In an attempt to further investigate or solve this contestation, one has to take into consideration the blurry boundaries and the problematics of the definitions of street art and graffiti, a grey zone of incessant scholarly concern. However, I will deliberately avoid to deeply engage in the debate about this delimitation since it is not within the scope of this thesis. I follow Peter Bengtsen's argument that 'the term street art cannot be defined conclusively since what it encompasses is constantly negotiated'.⁹⁷ Without any clear delimitation between these two-very often overlapping terms of street art and graffiti, it appears to be a rather oversimplifying initiative to categorize or try and systematize artworks, artists or methods. For that, I contend on the very appropriate term of “movement” as in the *street art movement*, which illustrates the constant moving and negotiations between graffiti and street art and the need to situate the debate under specific conditions each time.

In the empirical case of Banksy's stencil in the West Bank area, there can be found elements which categorize the artwork in both the street art and graffiti. The stealthy and sneaky way with which Banksy executed the stencil is a telling example of the graffiti culture. While the openness of

95 C. Lewishon, *Street Art, The Graffiti Revolution*, London, Tate, 2008, p. 87.

96 K. Iveson, 'The wars on graffiti and the new military urbanism', *City*, vol. 14, no. 1-2, 2010, p.127. Italics in the original

97 P. Bengtsen, *The street art world*, Lund, Almendros de Granada Press, 2014, p. 11.

the images' content, the easy interpretation and the unhindered reception, which were achieved with the use of worldwide recognizable pictorial figures and the absence of any verbal element, correspond better to the street art world. Unlike street art, graffiti writing is regarded as an internal language, a not always legible code, destined to be deciphered mainly among the crews, an elitist activity that polarizes people. Additionally, 'street art is often reflective of the place where it is installed, whereas graffiti writing is a more representative of a more standardized universal language'.⁹⁸ Banksy's stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* explicitly refers to, makes use and depends on the site where it is created. Lastly, the particularity of the graffiti and street art activities on the West Bank Wall lies in the blurring of the already unclear delimitation between sanctioned, unsanctioned and commissioned nature of street art⁹⁹, on a denounced illegal Wall. From the Israeli side, along some big avenues there have been commissioned artworks painted on the Wall to beautify it or make it less conspicuous.¹⁰⁰ Street art is usually created under legal or sanctioned or commissioned conditions, while graffiti is very often an illegal trespassing activity. But the West Bank Wall, which is declared illegal from the United Nations, but legal for the Israeli society, is not proffered to draw secure conclusions.

Therefore, Banksy's famous stencil could be considered both as street artwork and graffiti art. However, what remains to be researched is to which extent an illegal Wall can be regarded as a sanctioned cultural platform for street art activities. Before the construction of the Wall, the researcher Julie Peteet explains why during the years of 1987-1993 graffiti in the area affirmed resistance and thus it was declared illegal and was immediately whitewashed; 'in an era of simpler communication technology and heavy censorship, graffiti was the means to summon people and radicalize them, with furtiveness and risk involved'.¹⁰¹ But in the later period of the Wall construction and of separation and mobility restriction, graffiti is mainly written by non-Palestinians in solidarity with them and addressed to an international audience. Therefore, street art or graffiti practice is now tolerated without being related to riots and insurrection and is no longer conceptualized as a security threat nor as a savage offensive.

Unlike some of Banksy's stencil paintings created in Western cities which convey explicit anti-militaristic depictions and subversive militaristic pictorial comments, this specific stencil in Palestine is about a careless, childish, joyful image. I argue that this image within the Palestinian military context can be regarded as a carrier of a generic meaning for peace and resilience. The lack of any reference, or incitement to violence, or insult to the Israeli side can ensue for the artwork's maintenance on the Wall and for a broader spectrum of recipients. In doing so, it risks the

98 C. Lewishon, *Street Art, The Graffiti Revolution*, p.63.

99 P. Bengtsen, p. 164.

100 Photographer Kai Wiedenhofer in Gaza Strip Border, Kibbutz Netiv Ha'Asara, Israel, in *Keep your Eye on the Wall*, Paris, Saqi Books, 2013.

101 J. Peteet, 'Wall Talk', p.340.

possibility to develop any stronger connections with the Palestinian residents and it bears evidence to an abandonment of a strong political message. His main concern has been to raise global awareness for the segregation suffered due to the Wall through online distribution, rather than to make an impact in the Palestinian society. His messages through street art are not offered for internal consumption or interpretation, but they are designated to be exported for the receivers abroad. This claim is precisely testified by the kitten he painted in the region of Gaza strip, commenting that this is the only way to attract people's attention on Facebook.¹⁰²

Independently of the content and the meaning it carries, it is becoming a pacifying and unifying activity, especially in such military zones, that aims to enhance urban creativity and achieved to expand the touristic attractions in the area, beyond the pilgrimage purposes. This asserts to street art closer to urban creativity, rather than vandalism and artistic defiance or disobedience. In the Palestinian side, and especially in very touristic spots, the painting on the Wall occurs under sanctioned circumstances, as if the Wall is an open “legal” graffiti wall.¹⁰³ The case of a Dutch company entitled “Write your message on the Wall” is the most revealing, in my opinion, of how much the audience, the content and the purpose have changed in regards to graffiti messages in the area. The painters take orders through a Web site that lets customers get a message on the wall. For the equivalent of \$40, a Palestinian will spray paint the message and send three digital photos of it. Anything goes, marriage proposals, jokes, notes to friends, as long as it isn't extremist, hate-filled, or pornographic'.¹⁰⁴

So far, I have presented the reasons why it is rather untenable to categorize Banksy's stencil as merely street art or graffiti painting, based on the combination of quick execution of the stencil, the easy interpretability of the image, and the illegality of the Wall. In the following section, I will proceed to an analysis of the stencil as a technological modality which not only shrinks the time demanded for the execution of the design but also enables a mass reproduction of the same painting. Some of Banksy's stencils in the West Bank are very sophisticated stencils with different colored layers while others are merely the imprint of the black pigment through the pre-cut out design, just like in the case of *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)*. Between the quick execution and the repeatable execution as the main merits provided by stencil, I assume that Banksy's choice of that technique relies on the former. His stencils in the West Bank are unique, meaning that they were executed only once, which partly justifies the selling price in the street art market of the ones which have been removed.

102 *Internet Cats: Banksy kitten highlights Gaza's plight*, NBC News, 2015

<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/middle-east-unrest/internet-cats-banksy-kitten-highlights-gazas-plight-n313381> (accessed June 2018).

103 Banksy's gift shop in Bethlehem, next to the *Walled Off Hotel* sells spray can equipment to visitors in order to paint their own message on the Wall. Legal graffiti walls are legal spaces for everyone to spray or paint. They have been introduced in many European cities as an attempt to mitigate illegal graffiti and vandalism.

104 M. Gray, *Palestinian Graffiti Spreads Message of Peace*, CNN News, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/04/16/palestinian.wall.graffiti/index.html>, (accessed June 2018).

Stencil Technique and Massive Reproducibility

Stencil is a technique to produce an image by using an intermediate object with pre-designed cut out holes, gaps and areas and by applying pigment on those gaps to leave the imprint on the surface beneath; 'in other words, stencil is the creation of a positive image out of a negative structure'.¹⁰⁵ The advantages offered by this technique is the fact that the stencil, which is both the intermediate object and the image produced,¹⁰⁶ can be repeatedly reused easily and quickly. This technique is dating back to the prehistoric era. Stenciled hands have been found painted in caves with blowing pigment over the hand placed against the wall.¹⁰⁷ Stencil images can carry pictorial and, or verbal messages with a simplistic form which facilitates the implementation of the design on the surface.

Beyond the rapid and easy reproducibility provided to the creators, the stencil technique has the merit of the readability and simplified form. The simplified form does not correspond to a simplistic derogatory approach, but rather illuminates the clarity of the design as the most dominant feature. This clarity enables the artwork to be distinguished in the surroundings, since 'the distinctive highly stylized stencil technique is an example of a readable iconographic style of inscription'.¹⁰⁸ Compared to the individual street art portraits by JR, Banksy's stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* can be seen as quite generic and simplified, both in terms of form and content. Most probably, a more detailed and refined street artwork is sacrificed for the sake of an international audience and worldwide redistribution. This interpretation aligns with Chris Carlsson's argument that '[...] stencil art is one of the oldest languages, a language that transcends nation, tribe and ethnicity'.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, in comparison to the tagging and the graffiti writing, 'stencil images and murals are usually less cryptic than Style Writing and the stencil has a communicative element of clarity and reproducibility that enables readability'.¹¹⁰

Additionally, there has been a debate whether or to which extent stencils are by nature political. Their clear and simple form and their massive reproducibility was the reason to be used by different political movements since the 60's and afterwards. Either in printed version or on sprayed walls, as carrier of political messages that can be quickly reproduced and disseminated, the stencil technique has been a useful propaganda tool. The creators intend to trigger the audience with humorous graphics and overcome established visual connotations of the dominant imagery of city signs and

105 A. Kordic, *What is a Stencil? The Evolutions of the Stenciling Technique*, Widewalls, 2017, <https://www.widewalls.ch/what-is-a-stencil/> (accessed June 2018).

106 'Stencil' in *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, June 2018, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stencil> (accessed August 2018)

107 R. Howze, *Stencil Nation, Graffiti, Community and Art*, San Francisco, Manic D Press, 2008, p.7

108 Y. Zaimakis,, 'Welcome to the civilisation of fear, on political graffiti heterotopias in Greece in times of crisis', *Visual Communication*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2015, p.376.

109 R. Howze, *Stencil Nation, Graffiti, Community and Art*, p.6.

110 U.Blanché, *Banksy.Urban Art in a Material World*, p.49.

advertisements. In that sense, I argue that stencils have an inherent sociopolitical dimension, independently of their content, but based on their interrelation with the surroundings and on their interaction with the beholder. In the same vein, it is not the pictorial utterances in Banksy's stencil (which are quite generic) but the site-specificity of the Wall which attributes a politicized dimension in his artwork.

The concise distinctive visual outcome of the stencil *NoTitle(BallonGirl)* is easily perceived and internationally interpreted. Although the stencil technique could attribute to this artwork a high potential of reproducibility, it was other forms of technological reproductions that disseminated the image. Therefore, answering the title of this chapter, Banksy did not “bomb” in the West Bank the stencil image of the girl with the balloons. He painted it only once. My assumption is that the simple visual form of the stencil has enabled the expanded reproducibility of Banksy's stencil printed and converted in other media. This dimension is further enhanced by the fact that the stencil technique is also used in screen printing and duplicating machines. 'Banksy's ideas are designed for reproducibility, they become art only with the quantity of their reproduction'.¹¹¹ As a result, the image of this specific stencil has been so widely redistributed and reproduced that it has been printed and sold on many touristic products, such as mugs, t-shirts and bags.¹¹² The consumerism trend which accompanied the image of the specific stencil marks the transition from the street art of the Wall to the urban art, where the art is not only about the site-specificity of the street (Wall), but becomes part of the daily routines of the once beholder and now consumer and user of the products in the urban life. The nature of this specific stencil as a very generic and easily interpretable image could allow for its conversion to a brand logo, as if it stands for a commercial sign for corporations.

Following Ulrich Blanché, the mass production and purchase of souvenirs reveals 'a lack of personal relationship with a piece of art and its surrounding [and] leads to an artificially established relationship'.¹¹³ Therefore, Banksy's abandonment for any explicit political leverage, the lack of any public documentation that bears evidence for unmediated relationships between him and the locals, as well as the aftermath commodification of his artwork and the very broad readability of this picture are the main factors for considering it as a spectacle. The appropriation from the art market and the commodification of Banksy's artworks is something that undoubtedly contradicts with his beliefs and critique against consumerism manifested throughout some of his artworks and books. The counter culture of graffiti and street art, which employs a playful critique against consumerism, inevitably or even deliberately, becomes prey to the consumer society and partakes in it.¹¹⁴ In my opinion, the contradiction between the artist's initial intention, evidently displayed in his overall

111 U. Blanché, p. 197

112 See Appendix Figure 2.2

113 U. Blanché, p.199

114 U. Blanché, p.198

work, opposed to the aftermath treatment of his artworks points that Banksy's artworks can be regarded as a sociocultural experiment.

Without any derogatory approach to the possibilities and limits of the street art and urban creativity in areas of conflict, my goal is to argue about the stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* overshadowing the military surrounding while cultivating alienated relations and commodifying activities. To do so, I return to Mitchell's intellectual operation on the convergence of spectacle and surveillance and I get inspiration from Debord; 'the spectacle brings together and explains a wide range of apparently disparate phenomena'.¹¹⁵ For the purposes of this essay, I contemplate on the disparate visual phenomena of Banksy's stencil and on the Israeli drone surveillance and operations.

From Remote Solidarity to Remote Warfare

In the previous paragraphs I presented my analysis on Banksy's stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* in the area of the West Bank Wall, focusing mainly on the successful intention to raise global awareness through the reproduction and commodification of this artwork, rather than engaging with the locals and interact for a cultural cause. I would call Banksy's street artwork and their sympathizer beholders as the agents of the remote solidarity enacted towards the Palestinian people. This is to highlight that the street artwork in the area enhances remote solidarity from different areas of the globe without the need of someone's presence and quite possibly without one's acknowledgement of the military context. In that sense, it resonates Debord; 'the spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relationship between people that is mediated by images'.¹¹⁶ Banksy's stealthy and sneaky street art creation in the area, but mainly the aftermath reproduction of his artwork, functioned as a proxy solidarity, as a vessel to transmit and receive a world-wide general compassion and support for the Palestinian suffering.

Much in the same vein of remoteness and lack of engagement, it is important to examine the remote warfare that is waged in the area through the expanded use of drones. Drones are unmanned aerial vehicles whose growing implementation in the military practices relies on the elimination of the need for proximity, the elimination of any 'immediate relation of reciprocity'.¹¹⁷ With the use of drones, those in charge of an attack don't have to be bodily present in a hostile and dangerous environment, but they can operate from a safe control room and direct and use the drone remotely. Drones' usage is not only about striking missiles on rooftops, but also to document and archive, to surveil from above and provide imagery which would be impossible for a human eye to capture

115 G. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p. 10

116 G. Debord, p. 7

117 G. Chamayou, *A theory of the Drone*, Paris, The New Press, 2015, p.14.

from a high above distance. Drones' technological advancement achieves to combine a physical distance with an ocular proximity. Therefore, they are employed not only within war zones and military operations but are becoming a popular tool for policing activities in urban territories, in many Western cities as well.

Israel is one of the world's leaders countries in manufacturing military unmanned aircrafts and it is increasingly advancing the technologies for commercial drones.¹¹⁸ Although there is a quite wide variety of drones' usage, from the recreational ones to the sniper drones, the majority of such aircraft flying over the West Bank and the Gaza strip are for purposes of military surveillance and operations. Drone technologies have enabled '[I]srael's switch from a permanent military occupation of Gaza to a policy of dominating the area from above through drone surveillance and strikes... [T]he Gazan human rights group al-Mezan calculates that drone strikes killed at least 760 Gazans between 2006 and 2012'.¹¹⁹ Although, so far, the state of Israel has not officially acknowledged the use of drone strikes and missiles, many human organizations and visual analysts claim the opposite. This decline in acknowledgment probably emanates from the reckoning that it would 'complicate [Israel's] sales of its drones to foreign governments'.¹²⁰ In the West Bank area, camera drones for journalistic purposes have been banned, along with the prohibition of activists filming video of the Israeli Forces. This Israeli decision is reportedly a part of 'the escalation against journalists in the wake of the American recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel' in December 2017.¹²¹ ¹²²This raises concern about the protection of the right to information and the increasing censorship imposed. At the same, this situation might render the street artworks as hollow representations of something bigger and elusive, of an environment of conflict and imprisonment that is not allowed to be captured nor redistributed.

For the purposes of this essay I focus my analysis on two hacked images from Israeli drones which were intercepted by an American and British classified operation code-named the "Anarchist" which operated on a mountaintop listening post in the Mediterranean island of Cyprus.¹²³ The snapshots were part of the file that Edward Snowden trusted to the hands of the journalist, artist and film-maker Laura Poitras and ultimately reached the public audience. She then

118 B. Blum, *9 Israeli Drone Startups that are soaring to success*, Israel21c, 2018, <https://www.israel21c.org/9-israeli-drone-startups-that-are-soaring-to-success/> (accessed June 2018).

119 S. Graham, *Vertical, the City from Satellites to Bunkers*, p. 72

120 R. Mackey, *Secret Israeli Report Reveals Armed Drone Killed Four Boys Playing on Gaza Beach in 2014*. The Intercept, 2018. <https://theintercept.com/2018/08/11/israel-palestine-drone-strike-operation-protective-edge/> (accessed August 2018)

121 *Israel Pushes Bill to Criminalize Filming IDF Soldiers*, DemocracyNow, 2018, https://www.democracynow.org/2018/6/18/headlines/israel_pushes_bill_to_criminalize_filming_idf_soldiers (accessed June 2018).

122 *Israel Bans Camera Drones in West Bank*, Middle East Monitor, 2018 <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180321-israel-bans-camera-drones-in-west-bank/> (accessed June 2018).

123 Currier and Moltke, *Anarchist Snapshots, Hacked Images from Israel's Drone Fleet*

used these images among other installations in her solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art during 2016. My choice in implementing those two images relies on their public availability, and desires to highlight some converging points appeared in the process of producing visualities on the account of street art and the military gaze and surveillance. In explaining the title of this section, the first element that triggered my association and correlation of those two visualities (street art and military surveillance) is the remoteness, the need and desire for a safety distance with an ocular proximity. In that sense, street artists although they have visited and experienced at first hand the site of conflict, they rely on the indispensability of the online remediation and reproduction. So, the street art of Palestine as spectacle develops a remote audience. By the same token, drone operators don't have to physically participate in the battlefield, but instead they are inside a ground control room (GCS for Ground Control Systems), in front of monitors.¹²⁴ Although, one can argue that drone operators' position and task is quite more active than the spectacle consumption of the street art beholders, my intention through this juxtaposition is to highlight the lack of physical engagement of both sides and their dominant reliance on the visuality produced.

Visual Analysis of two hacked images from Israeli drones

For a visual analysis of those images I follow the analysis of the journalists of the *Intercept*, Currier and Moltke. In their turn, they had to consult drone experts to decipher a more graspable visual interpretation. The first image depicts an Israeli drone Heron TP or Eitan (which means strong or steadfast) and can hover for up to 36 hours.¹²⁵ Since the signal is poor, and the image is blurry, without more technical process it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the objects which appear to be mounted under the wings. In some other shots of the same type of drone, Heron TP, it appears that there is some wing-mounted equipment, either sensors or missiles, but again the low quality of the images does not allow to confirm or know more details.

The second image does not depict the drone itself, but what the drone captures, and the drone operator sees; the bird's eye-view of the drone gaze. The display marking in the right upper corner indicates the company of the drone, and the nature of the image reveals that the drone was equipped with infrared sensors, with FLIR (Forward-Looking Infrared) camera. Evidently, without the consult of drone experts there is not much that the public can decipher from the above images. Not to mention the complete human eye illegibility of some other hacked images from Israeli drones, intercepted by the same operation.

124 G. Chamayou, *The theory of the drone*, p. 22

125 Currier and Moltke, *Anarchist Snapshots, Hacked Images from Israel's Drone Fleet*

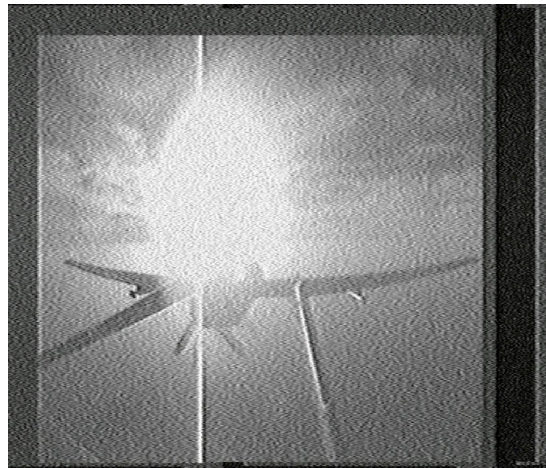


Figure 3a: Hacked Image of Israeli drone. Image by Laura Poitras.(2016)

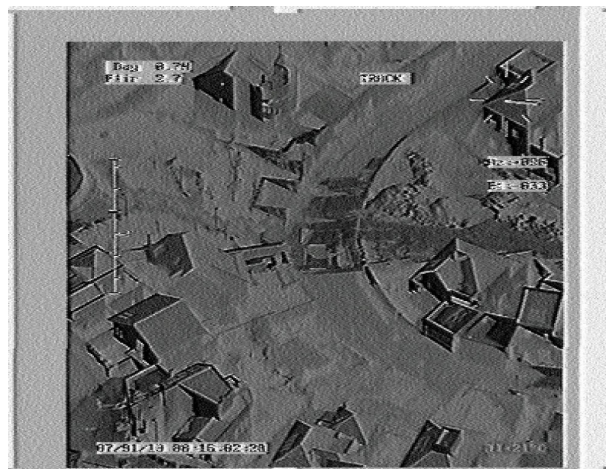


Figure 3b: Hacked Image of Israeli drone's view. Image by Laura Poitras. (2016)

The birds eye-view and the video streaming from a position where human cannot stand or of what a human eye cannot perceive (i.e. infrared image) offer a new challenging visual regime, that triggers our perspective about images and the world that surrounds us. Harun Farocki, in his essay *Phantom images*, calls 'such pictures, made neither to entertain nor to inform, operative images. These are images that do not represent an object but rather are part of an operation'.¹²⁶ The illegibility of the drone imagery reveals the limits of the claim for objectivity and realism on the account of the visual regime of surveillance. '[T]he image no longer functions as a representation but rather a construction of the site of engagement'.¹²⁷ If one finds realism in an image that a human eye cannot perceive, or that the public audience cannot decipher, then probably bestows blindfolded upon the machine vision or the elite of professional experts to understand the world for one's

126 H. Farocki, *Phantom Images*, Public, vol. 29, 2004, p. 17

127 L. Morisson, 'Drone Warfare, Visual Primacy as a Weapon', in *Trans Visuality: The cultural dimension of visibility*, Liverpool University Press, vol. 2, 2015, p. 201-214. Available in Database SwePub. (accessed August 2018).

account.

I argue that the inadequate depictions of details and the often human eye illegibility attribute an intense illusionary dimension to these drone images. Since art is also a way to challenge human perception, beyond aesthetic merits and criteria of artfulness, there is a possibility to find an interest in these images as an artwork. 'If we take an interest in [those] pictures, this is because we are [...] weary of the ever -changing and many-channeled program of images custom-made to mean something to us'.¹²⁸ The effort to approach and extract a meaning in those images develops a mystification, which can allow them to be considered as art, although they still are deprived of any informative or entertaining purpose. The above interpretation explains the inclusion of those two hacked images in the solo exhibition of Laura Poitras at the Whitney Museum. This illusionary dimension is found both in Banksy's stencil and in the two hacked images. However, street art is not supposed to represent reality, unlike military surveillance which is bound to serve that purpose.

The spectacle of street art and the theater of drone warfare

Having outlined in the first part of this chapter the reasons why Banksy's stencil partakes in the spectacle dimension produced in Palestine (remoteness of the viewer, commodification/reproducibility and lack of engagement with the locals), I will now proceed to an analysis about the visual experience of drone warfare as theater. Following Hito Steyerl, the term "Theatre of War" has been used very commonly to describe the significance and the never ending quest for a detached disembodied viewing in the waging of war. For example, the attachment of 'suicide cameras [...] in missiles and smart bombs, broadcast live until they explode'.¹²⁹ Since real drone imagery is scarcely available to the wide audience, I approach that issue from the imagery provided by video-games consoles. The expanded use of video-games in order to simulate the battlefield and train the drone operators bears evidence of the similar visuality between video-games and drone imagery. In fact, it is people keen on playing video-games that are being recruited and trained by military forces for drone operations.¹³⁰ '[T]he new military urbanism and its wars are overwhelmingly performed and consumed as visual and discursive spectacles within the spaces of electronic imagery'.¹³¹

Additionally, I believe that it can be very enlightening to conduct the analysis from the perspective of the drone operator as the closest possible beholder of the drone images. The lack of physical proximity and engagement with the targets, compared to the decisive role and the deadly

128 H. Farocki, *Phantom Images*, p.18

129 H. Steyerl, *Duty Free Art, Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*, London, Verso, 2017, p. 130, 136

130 S. Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, p. 68-69

131 S. Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, p. 68.

effects of drone operations cultivates the need to experience the viewing as a spectacle. This need amounts to one's involvement and accountability to be lost within mediations and delegations in the chain tasks. 'Seeing warfare as theater provides a physical escape for the participant: with a sufficient sense of theater he can perform his duties without 'implicating' his real self'.¹³² There have been cases where the drone operators abandon the need for a secure knowledge about the identity of the targeted.¹³³ And their unhindered reliance on behavioral profiling and algorithmic pattern matching can result in indistinguishable crowd killings (signature strikes).¹³⁴ The low quality or the illegibility of the images provided to the drone operators bear evidence to the (deadly) illusionary dimension of drone imaging as opposed to the claims of objectivity and clinical accurate intervention. Although it is still debatable if the drone warfare can guarantee for the surgical precision in the attacks and the elimination of loss of human lives, the consideration of the battlefield as a theater and the aesthetic pleasure drawn by this encounter resonate Benjamin in the ending of his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*. '[Human kind]'s self alienation has reached the point where it can experience its own annihilation as a supreme aesthetic pleasure'.¹³⁵

As a result, there is an emerging convergence of spectacle and military surveillance and operations which highlight the absence of physical proximity and the firsthand experience and involvement. Either when it comes to observe or consume the reproduction of a street artwork or the mapping birds eye-view of an area, the lack of contextualization and of the sensory embodied engagement amounts to the consideration of street art and warfare as spectacle. '[E]very surface, however tiny or huge, now has objective existence only in and through its relationship to observation, to the viewpoint of one observer or another'.¹³⁶ Therefore, I argue that Banksy's stencil and the hacked images from the Israeli drones are produced to be observed from a distance. The spectacular nature of street art and drone warfare lies in those characteristics and converges two disparate visual phenomena, street art image and drone surveillance. 'The spectacle thus reunites the separated, but it reunites them only *in their separateness*'.¹³⁷

In an attempt to (re)unite these two ostensibly disparate forms of visibility, I suggest that there is a meeting point through Benjamin's theory on the mechanical (and digital) reproducibility of the work of art and the impact of the numerous visual challenges opened up by the technological advancements.

132 P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 192.

133 R. Mackey, *Secret Israeli Report Reveals Armed Drone Killed Four Boys Playing on Gaza Beach in 2014*.

134 G. Chamayou, p. 51

135 W. Benjamin, *The work of Art in the age of its mechanical reproducibility*, p. 42

136 P. Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, London, Sage Publications, 2000, p. 34

137 G. Debord, p. 16

If one considers the dangerous tensions which technology and its consequences have engendered in the masses at large-tendencies which at critical stage take on a psychotic character-one also has to recognize that this same technologization [Technisierung] has created the possibilities of physic immunization against such mass psychoses.¹³⁸

The following interpretation aims to decipher Benjamin's quote and apply it within the purposes of this essay. The *dangerous tensions* evoked by the military digital visualizing technologies in drone warfare can lead to the annihilation of civilians and children, indistinguishably from the lawful targets and the combatants. Crowd killings and preemptive attacks 'reveal a dangerous absence of knowledge about the people targeted far below'.¹³⁹ While at the same time, the *psychotic character* inhabits in the aesthetic pleasure that inevitably the drone operators try to distill during their duty to cope with their mental and physical involvement in this asymmetrical war wage. This psychotic character also lurks in the emerging notion of militainment, a fusion of military simulation, information warfare, news and entertainment.¹⁴⁰ The limited disposition of images from drone warfare is counteracted by the large implementation of the drone-like imagery in video-games and movies.

On the other hand, and especially in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Banksy's stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* through its massive reproducibility, commodification and consumption stands as a *physic immunization*, as a feeling of complacency and a fallacy of engagement with the sufferings in the area. In my view, the collective multifaceted reception of this stencil painting is ensued by its reproduction in many different media, tangible-mechanical and intangible-digital, from pillows, and tattoos, to websites and books. Like another Mickey Mouse,¹⁴¹ this stencil image counter-balances, soothes the retinas and distracts the beholder's attention from the tacit undeclared drone warfare. It provides a collective remote feeling of an aesthetic encounter and 'keeps them [the spectators] isolated from each other'.¹⁴² I argue that the massive nature in the stencil reproducibility and in the drones' production of big amounts of digital visual data is common. In an attempt to comprehend better the *same technologization*, mentioned by Benjamin, I present in the following section my research on the potential commonalities or the differences in visual features and technological means of the stencil and the drone imaging.

138 W. Benjamin, p. 38

139 S. Graham, *Vertical, The City from Satellites to Bunkers*, p. 77.

140 S. Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, p. 69

141 I draw the comparison inspired by Benjamin's thoughts on Disney films and the collective laughter as a therapeutic release of unconscious energies. W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, p.38

142 G. Debord, p. 16

'Same technologization' and technological appropriation

Military industry's concern and investments on stealth technology testifies the importance to stay concealed and to avoid detectability. Drone technology is extremely crucial for the stealth military technology because 'drone vision[...] is able to project a surveillant gaze while conspicuously prohibiting its own exposure'.¹⁴³ By the same token Banksy, and many other guerrilla artists, are very concerned about remaining unseen and undetectable. In the cases of the stencil production, the quality of the visual outcome is very often low, depending on the artist's skills, on the spray can and on the speed of the execution of the design. This low quality of the image of the stencil can make it difficult to decipher the details and all the pictorial or verbal elements.

On the other hand, in drones imaging, depending on the sensors embedded in the vehicle and the software program, there can be high resolution or low-resolution images. For example, the digital program called Gorgon stare enables multiple sensors to capture real-time images of an area, and each individual video stream is pieced together to provide a wide scope of an area.¹⁴⁴ Consequently, the footage from multiple cameras results in a low quality of the image. However, cameras with infrared sensors can collect visual data not only from a location difficult for the human to approach, but also to visualize information imperceptible to the human eye. As a result, high resolution in temperature-based visuality can monitor and track heat-bearing objects such as guns, missiles, explosives, tanks, anti-aircraft vehicles, power generators and people.¹⁴⁵

The method of producing a positive image through a negative structure is a common feature in the stencil technique and in infrared imagery. In the case of the stencils, the negative structure consists of the intermediate object, with cut holes, where there is a gap for every pictorial or verbal element that is designed to be painted on the wall with pigment. The positive image is the stencil appeared. In infrared visuality, the images look very similar with the negatives of the photographic films. But instead of reversing the lighter objects to the darkest ones, in infrared images the objects which carry the biggest amount of heat are represented and reproduced in intense colors, such as red, orange or yellow. Therefore, drone imagery is not necessarily depicted only in grainy gray colors, while street art is not always colorful and it can be merely black. (Banksy's stencil *No Title (Balloon Girl)*, for example). In other words, in some cases drone imagery can be more colorful than the street art.

Unlike Banksy's stencil, which is so widely interpretable and recognizable, there is an indispensability for visual literacy to extract a meaning from these two hacked images, presented in

143 R. Stahl, 'What the drone saw: the cultural optics of the unmanned war', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2013, vol. 67, no. 5, p. 663

144 L. Morrison, 'Drone Warfare, Visual Primacy as a Weapon', p. 201-214

145 L. Parks, 'Drones, Infrared Imagery and Body Heat', *International Journal of Communication*, vol.8. 2014, p. 2518.

this chapter. Although these images are of very low quality because they were intercepted, they do not necessarily differ from the majority of drone imagery which is being disseminated by signals through satellites to reach the monitors in the ground control system. There is an absolute need for special consultants and visual analysts to decipher the visual information conveyed. Therefore, their difficulty to access springs not only from the public inaccessibility to a physical encounter but also from the difficulty to extract a meaning. Especially, in the cases of software and sophisticated algorithms which have been developed to cope with the immense amount of visual data gathered by drone sensors, very often the human eye is not only redundant but useless. It could be said that there is an overabundance in the digital production of drone footage opposed to their limited accessibility and interpretation.

Finally, the most prominent common feature of the production of Banksy's stencil and of the two drone images is the stealthiness and the need for secretiveness as dictated by the military surrounding and the militant nature of the graffiti culture. This need may in some cases imply a reduction of the quality of the image and of the details depicted. Although this was not the case for Banksy's stencil, which is very well sprayed and elaborated, the low quality is very evident in the two hacked images from the Israeli drones. However, in the case of the production of the drone images the human agency is completely absent, and the low quality is entirely a result of the electro-optical environment.

In order to obliterate all physical dangers evoked when drawing graffiti in such contested areas, such as the West Bank or the Gaza strip, Banksy could have proceeded in the use of drone graffiti. However, in that case he would have raised more suspicions and feelings of threat to the Israeli soldiers. Although back in 2005, commercial drones for recreational use were not so popular, there has been a growing tendency for experimentation and implementation of the drone technology in the graffiti and street art world. Varying from drones equipped with spray cans to painted landscapes that are specially designed to be captured by drone cameras.¹⁴⁶ In that sense, the counter-visibility of the street art can subvert the neo-visibility of the surveillance regime and appropriate the same technological means for the opposite purpose. This kind of appropriation of technological advancements on behalf of the graffiti writers and street artists is not a new phenomenon. Just like drones' initial design and usage has been for military purposes, aerosol spray carries a similar history. According to Kurt Iveson, 'the aerosol can was perfected and popularized during the Second World War by the US Army which provided aerosol insect repellents for soldiers stationed in tropical areas. The technology was gradually adapted for paint among other uses'.¹⁴⁷

The technological appropriation of military sophisticated advancements for recreational purposes, such as the field of street art and urban creativity, reveal the limits of a romantic antiwar

146 E.g. The graffiti artist KATSU or JR's project in Pakistan #NotaBugSplat during 2014.

147 K. Iveson, 'The wars on graffiti and the new military urbanism', p.128.

critique and activity. My stance is not in favor of any kind of military operations, instead I wish to unravel the contradiction between the content and the form, between a call for a peaceful resolution and the origins of the technological equipment employed to draw that message. Going beyond that contradiction comes an embarrassed admission of war as an indispensable locomotive for technological progress. In the case of drones structuring a new vertical reality and visuality, I believe that if 'social scientists need to raise their eyes from the ground', so do the artists.¹⁴⁸

Lastly, my alternative suggested interpretation of Banksy's stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* wishes to implement the expansive use of Israeli drones hovering above Palestinian houses. With the acknowledgement that Banksy's main concern with this stencil was to raise awareness specifically on the adversity suffered by the Wall, my interpretation considers the Wall as one more, very visible symptom of the general plight and the oppression against Palestinian people. The emancipation and the liberation that is represented by the elevation of the young girl above the Wall, as depicted in the stencil, although it pinpoints the segregation suffered because of the specific border artifact, it omits and contradicts with the vertical reality in the area. This is the reality of the drone warfare and the suffocating drone surveillance practiced by Israeli military forces. It is not the freedom but the military risk that comes from above. That risk inhabits in drones surveilling, policing, firing teargas canisters and above all proceeding to airstrikes and preemptive attacks.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued on the spectacular dimension of the stencil painting created by Banksy on the West Bank Wall, underlying its hybrid form between street art and graffiti, its commodification and the lack of the spectators' and consumers' engagement and experience in the site of conflict. On the other hand of the spectacle of the remote solidarity, encompassed in Banksy's stencil, lies the remote drone warfare and military surveillance waged in Palestinian territories. With the visual analysis of two hacked images from Israeli drones, I presented the need for visual literacy to extract a meaning and the illusionary dimension of the drone surveillance.

Referencing Benjamin, and the technological means for the massive mechanical and digital reproducibility, I comment on the dangers evoked by the tacit military visualizing technologies of drones while at the same time the wide reproduction of the image of Banksy's stencil and its conversion in different media has a therapeutic effect on the public. Therefore, I argue that there is indeed a convergence of the spectacle and the military surveillance and drone operations. Both in

148 S. Graham, *Vertical, The City from Satellites to Bunkers*, p. 23.

the sense of considering the drone warfare as a theater, but also in exploring the relation and co-optation of the Banksy's image as a spectacle widely reproduced which disorients from a deeper engagement to the visual data and to the impact produced by the drones. My alternative suggested interpretation of Banksy's stencil of the *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* takes into consideration the vertical threat of the drone operations and surveillance. Thus, it reveals the limits of its reception without the contextualization of the military surrounding.

Chapter 3: Reaching the Western Audience

Abstract

In the last chapter of this essay, I proceed to an analysis of the ways with which the artworks coming from or related to the Palestinian territories manage to reach and engage with the Western audience. In order to analyze the significance of site-specificity which is embedded on some of the artworks, I use as a theoretical framework Miwon Kwon's work. Referencing to the destabilization of the notion of site-specificity and the transferability of an artwork, I examine the reconfigurations of the place that can be traced when a visual artwork produced *from, about* or *by* the Palestinian area and the Wall is displayed within another Western context. In doing so, I draw from the empirical cases of JR's *Face2Face* project and Banksy's works transferred and revered in the Western cities, the gallery exhibition *Whole in the Wall* of the Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar and the *Astro Noise* exhibition by Laura Poitras. The overall intention is to explore the beholders' transitions from the observation and consumption of an artwork, to the bodily experience and to finally being observed, shaping a circuit that joins the spectacle with the surveillance techniques.



Figure 4: JR's project *Face2Face* from the West Bank Wall to the Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin (2007). Picture © jr-art.net

European Influences and Connotations on the West Bank Wall

The task to transmit, represent and transfer the distant and unknown experiences to an audience, in an engaging, adequate and thought-provoking manner, seems a difficult and complicated work, or even unfeasible and vain. Therefore, in the third and last part of this essay, I focus my analysis on the transferability of an artwork and its implications. By transferability I mean also the public availability and visibility and accessibility to visual data that have transformed into visual art by their inclusion in the museum exhibition, as is the case of *Astro Noise* curated by Laura Poitras. Before I proceed to the main part of my analysis, I will present some examples of street art on the West Bank Wall which testify for the art colonialism¹⁴⁹ enacted by international artists. Although the specific border artifact of the West Bank Wall has not been a consistent part of the thesis, the empirical material of JR's portraiture project and Banksy's stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* have been created on the Wall. Since the Wall is the main canvas for the street artists to create, it has become a major point of reference for the wider audience regarding the Palestinian areas. As a result, the Wall converts into a cultural platform, where many Western street artists are gathered from all over the globe to paint a message of solidarity, but also many locals have used the concreteness to perform actions of resistance and inclusion.

Although the artistic outcomes on the Wall show a universal embracement and concern about the separation and exclusion suffered from it, most of the times the messages carried are converted and translated in Western models and measurements to be broadly perceptible. Some of those visual artworks include a street art version of the '*Guernica*' painted by the street artist Ron English, as a clear connotation to Pablo's Picasso *Guernica* and the anti-war response in the years of the Spanish civil war (1936-1939). Another example is the slogan 'Sapere Aude' written on the Wall with plain black spray can. The Latin phrase means 'Dare to Know' and is part of Kant's essay (1784) *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?*. Additionally, Eugene's Delacroix famous painting *Liberty Leading the People*, which commemorates the French July Revolution (1830), has been transformed to a street art version with the Palestinian flag and the keffiyeh scarfs. Moreover, a renowned Renaissance sculpture created by Buonarroti, *Pieta* (the Pity), has inspired an anonymous artist to paint a Palestinian version of it, which depicts a woman with a hijab, holding in her arms a wounded Palestinian young man.

Of course, the most common comparison for making the West Bank Wall interpretable and graspable in the Western eyes is the use of the Berlin Wall. As a result, many scholars and journalists make use of the sizes of the Berlin Wall, which had half the height of the West Bank Wall. At the same time, on the West Bank Wall, there are numerous messages regarding the fate of

¹⁴⁹ By the term *art colonialism* I mean the projection of the Western cultural capital and the Western influence depicted on the Wall.

the Berlin Wall and the commonality of the border politics. From the German phrase 'Ich bin eine Berliner', meaning 'I am from Berlin' to hopeful and encouraging slogans such as: 'Like the Berlin, someday the Wall will be only in Museums'. Lastly, a very good example, which encompasses the common elements found in the West Bank Wall and in the Berlin Wall, not only regarding the segregation politics but also to the street art proliferation that both the Walls have inspired, is the mural painted on the West Bank Wall by the street artist Lushux. The mural entitled *The Kiss* depicts the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu having a passionate kiss with the U.S. President Trump. This artwork stands as a direct connotation to the famous graffiti painting *My God, Help me to Survive this Deadly Love*, depicting a passionate kiss between the Soviet politician Brezhnev and the German politician Honecker.¹⁵⁰

The above descriptions constitute a small and a non-exhaustive list of examples of artistic depictions on the West Bank Wall, which incorporate the Western cultural capital and prove evidence of the Western influence depicted on the Wall, not only in terms of the street artists' nationality, but also in terms of the content. This kind of exchange and conversion offers better communicative possibilities to a bigger audience, although it gives reasons to consider the effect and the extent of the art colonialism. In the following paragraphs, my goal is to follow the reverse trajectory, instead of examining the Western influence on the West Bank Wall which relies on the online channels of distribution, to focus on the modes and methods of the tangible artistic transfer and transportation of the Wall, of its concreteness and of its experience in the Western audience and environment.

In doing so, I use the theoretical framework constructed by the curator and art historian Miwon Kwon. Her approach not only considers the site as structural and integral element of an artwork and of the aesthetic experience, but she also researches further the new norms of transferability and mobilization of an artwork that was once site-bound.¹⁵¹ The overarching intention is to problematize the notion of the site-specificity and to argue about the destabilization of the term *site-specific* which is no longer embraced as an automatic signifier of criticality or “progressivity” but is rather used for cultural domestication and assimilation purposes in the art world (market and institutions).¹⁵² According to Kwon there are three dimensions inhabiting the notion of the site-specificity. Firstly, the experiential dimension which is about the physical attributes of the space and the sensory perception. Secondly, the social/ institutional which refers to the contextualization and the network of social, political and spatial factors and finally the discursive element, which is defined by the extent of the effects and the reception of an artwork.¹⁵³

150 See Appendix Figure 3.1

151 M. Kwon, *One place after another, Site-specific art and Locational Identity*, p. 38.

152 M. Kwon, p. 1

153 M. Kwon, p. 5

Regarding the empirical materials used in this attempt to analyze the impact of the site-specificity and the artistic transferability of the artworks produced in Palestine, I will begin by presenting the implications and displacements emerged when some of JR's and Banksy's pieces were transferred in European and American cities. My deliberate choice of those two artists hopefully will offer a complete image of their artworks and their dissemination, following the previous two chapters of this thesis.

JR and Banksy, from the West Bank to Western cities

When JR decided with his crew to transfer his project in European cities was very attentive and insightful to poster the pictures not only of the portraits themselves, but the photographic pictures of the posters as appeared when pasted on the Wall. Thus, the final visual outcome included parts and details of the Wall, such as the barbed wire or the characteristic hole on the edge of each concrete compartment, above the portraits. The specific posters of the portraits of the two lawyers (analyzed in Chapter 1) were transferred in the Berlin city, right outside the former checkpoint Charlie. This way the emerging allusions and correlations between the Berlin Wall and the West Bank Wall were publicly and visibly manifested. Checkpoint Charlie is now a famous touristic attraction in Berlin where visitors can have a better image of the spatial conditions and segregations dictated by the Berlin Wall. In Paris, the *Holy Triptych* of the portraits of the Christian Priest, the Rabbi and the Imam were pasted outside the cultural centre of Pompidou, in the square Igor Stravinsky. The initial production of a street artwork on a military watchtower and its aftermath reproduction outside a European museum carries a lot of structural and ideological burden. The actuality of the location, in other words the site-specificity, becomes symbolical and not experiential, can still partake in the identity of the artwork, but recedes from the sensory perception.

Unlike JR's project *Face2Face* which was transferred in many European cities (e.g. Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam) based on his personal choice and involvement, Banksy's artworks created in Palestinian territories were "smuggled" out of the city, without Banksy's sanction, raising a debate about legitimacy and provenance.¹⁵⁴ The stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* apparently cannot be removed and tangibly transferred since it is embedded on the concrete of the Wall. This is partly the reason why it has been so widely reproduced into other media, tangible and intangible, as shown in the previous chapter. The removal and the transportation of some of the other Banksy's artworks (e.g. the *Wet Dog* and the *Stop and Search*) which were created in Palestine and exhibited in galleries and cocktail parties in Southampton and Miami stripped of the locational frameworks of

154 P.Bengtson, *The Street Art World*, p. 94.

the artworks. The artworks which were being revered or auctioned in galleries, have been now deprived of the intensity and the impact of their original sociopolitical context. Following Miwon Kwon's saying: 'Site-specificity art comes to *represent* criticality rather than performing it. The 'here and now' of aesthetic experience is isolated as the signified, severed from its signifier'.¹⁵⁵ Meaning that the sociopolitical and military Palestinian context, the sensory reality of the site and the circumstances of the production of the artwork are disengaged by the content. That this context was only to serve to render the artwork unique, authentic and admirable. 'The greater the risk, the greater the respect'¹⁵⁶, and therefore the greater the attention in the street art market. To conclude, in both JR and Banksy's artworks transportation, there was an evident tendency to tame, in terms of institutionalization and commodification, the pieces, making them part of a museum or a gallery environment. At the same time, the infeasibility to transfer the original artwork that was pasted or sprayed on the Wall led to their transferability in terms of reproducibility. JR's took photographic pictures of the posters, and Banksy's stencil was printed on t-shirts, mugs and posters.

The 'Whole in the Wall' exhibition by Khaled Jarrar

Although JR's posters and Banksy's stencil couldn't be removed because they were embedded on the Wall, the Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar offered another alternative to this ostensibly unavoidable problem. The *Whole in the Wall* was his solo exhibition displayed in the Ayyam gallery in London in the summer of 2013. The exhibition included video installations, photography and sculptures made out of the concrete of the West Bank Wall, which the artist had chiseled secretly. The most innovative element in this exhibition was the construction of an 8-foot-high wall which extended the entire length of the gallery along the installations and was obstructing the visitors from their tracks. They were forced to scramble ungracefully through a small hole in the wall, that had the shape of Palestine, in order to have access to the rest of the exhibition. The use of the same concrete as the West Bank Wall is built of, praises for the authenticity of the artwork, giving the illusion of bringing the audience closer to the real, tangible circumstances of how it feels like to live next to the Wall.

The construction of a wall along the gallery is the most striking part of that exhibition, partly because of the dominating size, but mainly because of highlighting the significance of the bodily perception of the Wall. 'The most effective way to appreciate the importance of place is not to approach it as a total phenomenon [...]. What is needed is a new and quite particular way into place

155 M. Kwon, p. 38. Italics in the original

156 N. MacDonald, *The graffiti subculture*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, p. 171-190.

[...]rediscovered by means of the body'.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, a disembodied overview without entailing a corporeal involvement cannot convey the impact of the Wall on the lives of Palestinians, beyond a mental and rationalized reception. Khaled Jarrar demands from the visitors to follow the trajectory imposed by this replica wall and to clamber through a hole if they want to reach the exit of the gallery, the same way the route of the West Bank Wall dictates and defines Palestinians lives and everydayness.¹⁵⁸ The bodily simulation that the visitors of the gallery are going through raises question about the use of the white cube environment to successfully represent and reproduce the urban experience by the Wall.

In her review, Ashitha Nagesh underscores the disconnect and the decontextualization provided by the white cube and its institutionalized and sterilized environment, deprived of any urban and spatial connotations as the key element for the impact of this gallery exhibition.¹⁵⁹ The dissonance between the gallery site and the actual reality of living by the Wall was presumably within Jarrar's intentions. Ashitha Nagesh describes how she managed to squeeze and climb through the replica wall's hole and to eventually be treated with a glass of champagne. The temporary bodily inconvenience of the visitors 'is a mere ideological fiction'¹⁶⁰, in the sense that is a mere simulation -response to the simulacrum of the wall, and not an inescapable actuality. The luxurious surroundings of the gallery environment highlight exactly the limits and the failure of the representability and transferability of the Wall's experience. For that reason, the replica wall within the gallery's decontextualized context achieves to raise reflections on the relation between the site-specificity and the criticality of an artwork. To use Miwon Kwon's categories, the choice of the site of the gallery for Jarrar's replica wall makes his work a discursive work of art, based on the effect and on the audience's interaction and reception.¹⁶¹

The absurdity and the thought-provoking effect of building a wall in a gallery within the realm of urban art and creativity does not rely in bringing art to the streets but in constructing the urban experience as art, where the wall (the border artifact) is not considered as the site but as the very medium of the artwork. This inverse cultural domestication of the Wall experience with the metaphor of the public space into the private gallery 's four walls, cultivated some thoughts about the inverse geometry of the military tactic “walking-through-walls” within the realm of military urbanism. According to this tactic which is employed by military operations, Israeli soldiers and

157 E. Cassey , *The Fate of Place, A philosophical History*. USA, University of California Press,1997, p. 202-203.

158 See Appendix Figure 3.2

159 A. Nagesh, *Khaled Jarrar: Whole in the Wall, an incredibly moving exploration of life in Palestine at Ayyam gallery*, One Stop Arts, 2013, http://images.exhibite.com/www.ayyamgallery.com/Khaled_Jarrar_One_Stop_Arts_0.pdf (accessed August 2018)

160 A. Nagesh, *Khaled Jarrar: Whole in the Wall, an incredibly moving exploration of life in Palestine at Ayyam gallery*

161 Although the experiential dimension and the sensory perception are very evident, since the visitors have to move through the replica wall. It appears that Miwon Kwon's categories can overlap, but my suggestion is that the discursive element and the audience's interaction are the prominent elements of this artwork.

guerrilla combatants recede from the public space, the roads, the streets, the squares and the alleys and instead they move horizontally through housing walls and vertically through holes in the ceiling or the floor.¹⁶² The overall theoretical goal is to not interpret the space the same way the enemy interprets it, and as a result avoid the traps and the ambushes. Military technology tries to update with this reconceptualization of space manufacturing equipment that can allow to shoot and kill through walls.

Consequently, the abandonment of the open space in favor of the domestic interior, the reconfiguration of the outside and the inside, of the public and the private¹⁶³, which is conducted by the military forces in Palestinian territories testifies about the city and the urban environment not as the site but as the medium of the warfare. The same way the replica of the wall in Jarrar's exhibition was not the about the site of production of an artwork but about the very artwork itself. My suggestion is that urban creativity and military urbanism converge in their innovative interpretation of space based on the significance of movement and transferability. 'Rather than submitting to the authority of conventional spatial boundaries, movement became constitutive of space, and space was constituted as an event. It was not the order of space that governed patterns of movement but movement that produced and practiced space around it'.¹⁶⁴ Jarrar's exhibition highlights the importance of corporeal movement and mobility in the artistic discourse of the site-specificity and the transferability of an artwork. However, I believe that this discourse about the transferability of an artwork and the displacements in its receptive potentialities might risk enhancing the postcolonial gaze in art, and advocate for the art colonialism. Especially in the case of the West Bank Wall, where the artworks' transferability contradicts with the Palestinians stagnation.

The implementation of Jarrar's exhibition in the empirical material used for the purposes of this chapter serves two reasons. First, it offers an artistic example where parts of the West Bank Wall and cement were chiseled secretly. And secondly it serves as a stepping stone, from the mere consumption and observation of an artwork (JR's posters and Banksy's stencil), to the embodied and experiential perception (Jarrar's exhibition) to culminate to the *Astro Noise*' exhibition where the visitors and observers convert into being unknowingly observed.

162 See Appendix Figure 3.3

163 The walls have provided, since the eighteenth century, according to architectural historian Robin Evans, the physical infrastructure for the construction of privacy and modern subjectivity. See R. Evans, 'the Rights of Retreat and the Rights of Exclusion', in *Translation from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*, Architectural Association Publications, London, 1997.

164 E. Weizman, *Walking-through-walls*, Conference lectured at the symposium "Arxipelago of Exception. Sovereignties of extraterritoriality" CCCB 10-11 November 2005. Accessed in <https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/article/walking-through-walls>, (accessed July 2018).

The 'Astro Noise' exhibition by Laura Poitras

One of the two hacked images discussed in the second chapter along with some other images from Israeli drones also intercepted by the same operation, were part of the solo exhibition curated by Laura Poitras at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, during 2016. Laura Poitras, journalist, filmmaker and artist, is also known as the director of the documentary *Citizenfour* concerning the classified military intelligence operations revealed by Edward Snowden. Her main preoccupation is to question the activities of US government regarding drone warfare and massive surveillance through the dissemination of information of public interest. It comes as a surprise with high risk involved, to organize an exhibition based on the public exposure of encrypted and classified security documents and surveillance images. Six images intercepted from the Israeli drones were ink-jet printed on aluminum panels and displayed in the introductory section of the gallery. The mere fact of their inclusion in a museum is an attempt to make information available to a wider audience that otherwise would have been deprived of. However, the illegibility for the human eye of that visual information, which is transformed into visual art, unveils the artistic power of the images.

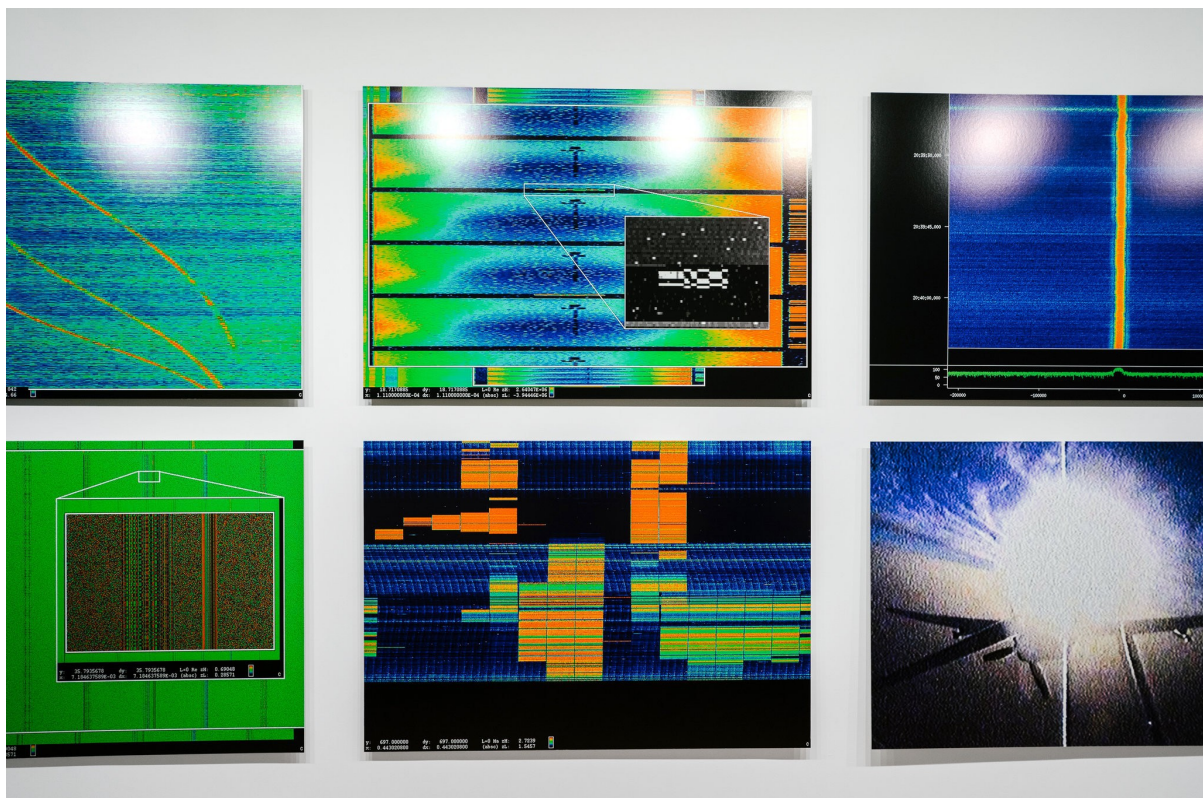


Figure 5: Series of Images hacked from Israeli drones and exhibited in *Astro Noise*, at the Whitney Museum, New York 2016. Picture ©Jake Naughton for the New York Times.

In fact, according to some analysts who had the opportunity to visit the exhibition, the images conveyed a resemblance to Gerhard Richter's paintings or to Nam June Paik's collages.¹⁶⁵ The striking difference, though, is that the six images from the Israeli drones are entirely produced by electro-optical devices, without any visual artists' deliberate involvement. I argue that there is an imposition of mystification cultivated by the entire technological way of production of the image. The beholders find an interest in an image that flees away from common sense and understanding. At the same time, it advances the curiosity as a proof of engagement. The viewers are seduced by what they see but cannot comprehend, unless they consult the accompanying captions of the images. My concern emerged with having six imperceptible images from Israeli drones being lauded revolves around the aestheticization of war. Referencing Benjamin: 'Fiat ars-pereat mundus, [...] expecting from war [...] the artistic gratification of a sense perception altered by technology'.¹⁶⁶ The phrase in Latin means 'let art be created while the world perishes'.

Just like the drone operators, the viewers in the gallery can draw aesthetic pleasure from the encounter with those or similar images produced by sensors mounted in military drones, designed to proceed to airstrikes and killings. This aestheticization could be easily disguised in a benign and courageous intention to bring encrypted and classified information into public exposure. At the same time, one can argue on the liberty of artists to produce artworks or display images, without the burden of a moral, didactic approach and without the aspiration to bring any social change.¹⁶⁷ However, I will show that *Astro Noise*' exhibition counter-balances the risk of aestheticizing war. Through the curation and the structure of the exhibited material, Poitras manages to engage the audience in a very intriguing way and to make them question on the established inextricable relation of daily life and surveillance, and the upcoming relation of art and surveillance.

In doing so, I would like to focus my analysis on the description and analysis of another part of the *Astro Noise* exhibition, which is not related to the Israeli drones. An installation named *Bed Down Location* after the military terminology for a location where the target is asleep, invites the visitors to lie down on a carpeted platform and enjoy the view of the night sky projected on the ceiling. The view is time-lapse video projections of the sky as it appears in Somalia, Yemen and Pakistan, all places where the US government has used drone aircrafts for military operations.¹⁶⁸ The sky in the image is a fusion of drones' flitting traces and stars. Most of the visitors don't see any reason to resist the invitation for stargazing or drone-spotting and lie down on the platform, even it

165 C. Vanderburg, 'Drone Art', *University of Pennsylvania Press*, vol.63, no. 3, 2016, p. 6-10. Available from ProjectMUSE, (accessed 7 August 2018).

166 W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility*, p. 42

167 C. Bishop, *Artificial Hells, : participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*, London, New York, Verso Press 2012, p. 276

168 H. Cotter, 'Laura Poitras: Astronoise' Examines Surveillance and the New Normal, *The New York Times*, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/05/arts/design/laura-poitras-astro-noise-examines-surveillance-and-the-new-normal.html> (accessed August 2018).

is in an uncomfortable unfamiliar dark place of a gallery. It is only until they have reached the last room and show of the exhibition that they realize that infrared sensors have been embedded in the ceiling of the room where the *Bed Down Location* is installed.¹⁶⁹ The sensors capture the bodily-heat traces of the visitors and the infrared images are being real-streamed in the other side of the gallery. Lastly, as if that surprise is not enough, the visitors discover that whatever personal electronic devices or cell-phones carry with them, have been detected and recorded. A video screen named *Last Seen* shows all the Internet activities carried out by devices throughout the exhibition.

Poitras' desire 'to make the viewer protagonist'¹⁷⁰ is accomplished through converting the observer to being observed. In that sense, I believe that she distances away from the risk of aestheticizing war as a mere spectacle to be consumed. The visual inclusion of the audience through systems of surveillance as part of the exhibited material renders Poitras' exhibition an example of participatory art. The visitors become engaged and embodied agents, even if they are surveilled, instead of mere observers and consumers. They oscillate between observer subjects and observed objects. The same way the overall problematic of the exhibition oscillates between visitors' agency and their unknowingly manipulation, as a simulation of real life people's agency and unknowingly surveillance. This ability to hold the opposites of agency and manipulation in tension, to sustain and provide contradictions is what differentiates art from other forms of social critique. This is what might have inspired Poitras to try something different than one more creation of a journalistic documentary.

Lastly, in an attempt to apply Kwon's theoretical model on the transferability and the site-specificity of an artwork, the versatile, initially intangible, electro-optical material of the exhibition along with the proliferation of locations of the drones raise a lot of difficulties. The transferability of the artwork in the case of *Astro Noise* exhibition lies in the transmutation of a visual data into a piece of visual art, still illegible to the human eye. This transferability moves from the undetectable optical fibers of the satellites' signals to the tangible printed posters hanging on the walls of the exhibition on Gansevoort street of New York. Since it offers visibility and public availability of classified visual information, I argue that it performs criticality. Therefore, the transfer of this 'artwork' is inextricable from its conversion to another medium. Lastly, I contemplate on the design of the spatial movements of the visitors inside the gallery. As a director, Poitras had control of time over the viewers, but as curator of an exhibition she had to abandon that and instead gain control of space. The way of structuring and organizing the material to be exhibited imposes a certain way of navigation through the gallery, like in the case of the *Whole in the Wall* exhibition by Khalled Jarrar. Influenced by her filmmaking abilities, *Astro Noise* 'has a clear narrative arc, moving from a

169 See Appendix Figure 3.4

170 B. Byrne, 'When Art Interrogates Surveillance', *New Scientist*, vol. 229, no. 3066, 2016, p. 48. Available from Academic Search Complete. (accessed August 2018).

scene-setting beginning to an explanatory middle to a surprise ending'.¹⁷¹

The notion of the colonial boomerang effect

The structure and the material exhibited in *Astro Noise* offers a very good example to proceed to the last part of this chapter regarding the notion of the colonial boomerang effect. The transition from observing a scene-setting made of images from Israeli drones to finally watch on monitor oneself being observed testifies for the implementation of military visualizing technologies in the urban daily context of the Western metropolis. The experimentation of military tactics and methods in the periphery and on colonized frontiers, before applying them to Western cities is reportedly taking place also in the West Bank and Gaza strip.¹⁷² With the increasingly overpopulated urban areas the stake is to manage to control big crowds with surgical precision and remoteness, and therefore the military equipment, tactics, and methods must be proven for their efficiency through experimentation. The doctrine of military urbanism is articulated with 'the extension of military ideas of tracking, identification and targeting into the quotidian spaces and circulations of everyday life and with surveillance technologies to penetrate into the civil quotidian life'.¹⁷³ The ongoing conflicts, the remote warfare and control operations waged in Palestine offer a “laboratory” condition to test new military apparatuses before applying them in the Western world. Foucault coined the term of the notion of the colonial boomerang effect and wrote:

It should never be forgotten that white colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power in the West and on the apparatuses institutions and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought to the West and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism on itself.¹⁷⁴

As a result, the military managements (and not invasion or occupation) of colonial peripheries offers material equipment and immaterial guidelines on how to control public dissent and

171 J. Kastner, 'The Museum is being Watched', *New Republic*, vol. 247, no. 4, 2016, p. 69. Available from Academic Search Complete. (accessed August 2018).

172 R. Stead, *Remote control repression: Israel tested its latest weapons against the the Great March of Return*, Middle East Monitor, 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180523-remote-control-repression-israel-tested-its-latest-weapons-against-the-great-march-of-return/> (accessed August 2018).

173 S. Graham, *Cities Under Siege, The New Military Urbanism*, London, New York, Verso, 2011, p.11.

174 M. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1976-6*, England, Penguin, 2003, p.103.

mobilization in Western big cities. However, the broad implementation of technologies initially originated for military purposes touches upon all aspect of civil life ranging from security issues to consumption and recreational practices. Gradually, the 'commercial modifications of such technologies are in turn being widely re-appropriated by militaries'¹⁷⁵, weaving a thread that connects *the citizen, the consumer and the combatant*. My aim is to add to this triple category of roles, the role of the artists, be it for the tools and the materials they use which originate from military inventions, (e.g. spray cans and drone graffiti) or for the use of the same urban space that is being under contestation and prey for military managements. The growing mobility and public interest to the artistic movement of urban creativity (part of which is the street art and the graffiti) is about to face the expanding doctrine of the military urbanism, and they both confirm the significance of the cityscape as a compressed space of roles and activities.

Israeli drones are one example of that case which is best described as the notion of the colonial boomerang effect. On one hand, the wide penetration of military techniques and equipment in the everydayness of Western societies after they have been tested in colonial peripheries is part of an internal colonialism. On the other hand, the spectacle of street art and urban creativity in Palestinian territories can be considered as art colonialism. This form of art colonialism, meaning the cultural appropriation of the Wall and the surrounding urban areas, has been criticized as an entertaining activity for solidarity purposes created by Western people and addressed mainly to Western audience, enhancing solidarity through spectatorship. If the street art spectacle of the area corresponds to the art colonialism enacted *by* the Westerners, and if the military surveillance corresponds to the internal colonialism enacted *on* the Western cities, then the spectacle and the surveillance converge and supplement with each other. In that sense, they produce an integrated circuit of visual culture from the detached observing of an artwork to being unknowingly observed.

Conclusion

In this chapter I begin with the description of the art colonialism and the Western inspired messages written on the Wall to present the projection of the Western cultural capital in the Palestinian territories. I continue by following the reverse trajectory, presenting the implications occurred when JR' project *Face2Face* was transferred from the West Bank Wall in European cities. The transferability of JR's project consisted of the photographic reproduction of the posters of the portraits. Their transfer in touristic spots or museums converted their site-specific nature to site-oriented. Both JR's project and Banksy's stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* could not be tangibly

175 S. Graham, *Cities Under Siege, The New Military Urbanism*, p. 63

transferred since they were embedded on the concrete of the Wall.

However, the Palestinian artist Khalled Jarrar for the purposes of his exhibition *The Whole in the Wall* secretly chiseled parts of cement of the Wall and reconstructed a replica of the wall inside the Ayyam gallery in London, hindering the visitors' mobility. While JR's project and Banksy's stencil transferred in the Western context were greeted and lauded as spectacle and as a commodity, Jarrar's exhibition managed to question the significance of bodily engagement and the corporeal movement to define the criticality of an artwork in different contexts. Although his artwork was also institutionalized, it continued to perform criticality and not just represent it; through adjusting and subverting, while following the norms of the institutionalized art world, he converted a gallery into a gallery-apartheid.

Finally, I focused my analysis on the exhibition *Astro Noise* curated by Laura Poitras at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The inclusion and display of the hacked images from Israeli drones, which were part of the empirical material in the second chapter, initially motivated my engagement with her exhibition, only to prove later that the surprise ending of her exhibition served to introduce the notion of the colonial boomerang effect. In the last room of her show, the visitors realize that they and their electronic devices have been surveilled and recorded throughout the exhibition. Thus, the notion of the colonial boomerang effect suggests that visualizing military techniques are being experimented in the peripheries to be later implemented in the daily lives of Western metropolis. In that way, the beholder from a mere observer, or consumer (JR's and Banksy's artworks, and images from Israeli drones), transits to a bodily engaged visitor (*Whole in the Wall* exhibition) and ends up being the spectacle to be observed (*Astro Noise* exhibition). The suggested circuit encapsulates the convergence of the spectacle and the surveillance produced by the military and recreational activities related or located in Palestine. Most probably, the Western beholder is more aware of the spectacular art colonialism represented by the street artworks rather than of the tacit internal colonialism represented by the military visualizing technologies.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the convergence of the spectacle with the surveillance, as suggested by Mitchell (1994) and Mirzoeff (2011). In order to research the extent and ways of correlation and to ground the suggested theory in concrete empirical cases, I proceeded to the selection of the empirical material of this study. They derive from the visibility produced and related to the Palestinian territories. By considering them a spectacle, I focus on the street artworks produced by internationally renowned street artists (i.e. JR and Banksy). By considering aspects of surveillance, I analyze the visualizing military techniques employed in the area; biometric passports and drones. The research questions that were used as guideline throughout the thesis concern the extent of the illusionary and the real dimension of the spectacle and the surveillance respectively. Trying to find their converging points, I researched the limits of representation of the Palestinian plight when it is merely based on the street artworks while exploring the possibility of alternative interpretations of a street artwork by contextualizing it within the military environment.

Interestingly, in the first chapter it appears that JR's project *Face2Face* and the biometric passports share a major component in common. JR's project and the identification process in the numerous checkpoints in the area are based on the visual motif of the face and of the portrait as the ultimate image for the subject's empowerment and for the categorization and identification process. The street art portraiture created by JR and the big posters of portraits depicting Israeli and Palestinian residents in funny grimaces functioned as a social leverage for visual encounter between the two people. By creating/reclaiming a space and illuminating the faces of the subjects, *Face2Face* project wished to promote a sense of community and to enhance the possibility of a dialogue for peaceful resolution between the two people.

However, what this street art project failed to take into consideration is the tacit surveilling military infrastructures in the one-way mirror checkpoints. The majority of the checkpoints are visually structured in a way that enables the Israeli soldier to remain unseen while supervising the Palestinian officer and the Palestinian passenger.¹⁷⁶ In that way, putting the two people face-to-face does not occur in a transparent and equal way but behind one-way mirror glazed rooms. At the same time, the implementation of the facial biometric technologies in the Palestinian passports marks the use of the face as an optical instrument which dictates mobility or not. A demarcation of borderlines is inscribed on the bodily feature of the face through the growing use of the biometric passports in the era of globalization and migration.¹⁷⁷ Since in the Palestinian territories the demarcation of borderlines has been a longstanding reason for political contestation, the employment of Palestinians' faces does not correspond to dialogue and empowerment but to classification and

176 E. Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, 2007

177 K. Gates, *Our Biometric Future, Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance*, 2011

segregation.

In answering the research questions which guided the conduction of this study, the convergence between the spectacle and the surveillance amounts to the common use of the visual pattern of the face, but for diametrically different reasons; social dialogue versus military classification. JR's portraits, even with the distorted visual outcome as a result of the apparatus of the 28mm and the funny facial expressions, are still comprehensible and graspable from the human eye. While, the visual depictions of the facial biometric algorithms convey an utterly illusionary dimension. Therefore, contrary to the illusionary dimension attributed to the spectacle, and to the objectivity attributed to the surveillance, JR's portraits are more real than the ghost-like image of the facial biometric algorithms.

In the second chapter, I investigate the convergence of spectacle and surveillance based on the visual analysis of the stencil *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* created by Banksy and on the analysis of two hacked images intercepted from Israeli drones. I argued on the dimension of the spectacle attributed to the stencil painting created by the elusive graffiti artist and I analyzed the reasons why Banksy's stencil can be considered both as graffiti and as street art. Furthermore, the technological modality of the stencil technique facilitated the mass reproduction of this stencil image in numerous souvenirs sales objects and on digital media. In that sense, the massive reproducibility, the commodification and the alienated relations testify for the function of that stencil image as a spectacle. On the other hand, in the Israeli drone surveillance and operations there is equally a lack of physical engagement and a remote relation between the operator and the surveilled. However, I argue that it is not merely the conversion of surveillance into spectacle that suffices for their convergence.

In doing so, I situate my research within the visual technological advancements which ensure for a massive mechanical and digital reproducibility of an image. These advancements have allowed the vast reproduction of Banksy's stencil image, either in tangible or in intangible form. While at the same time, similar technological advancements have equipped the military operations with increasingly sophisticated digital visualizing techniques, mounted in drones. Referencing Benjamin, I argue that the broad spectacular commodification of Banksy's image has a therapeutic and soothing effect on the remote audience. This effect counter-balances the dangerous tensions evoked by the visual means in drone technology.¹⁷⁸ These dangerous tensions go beyond the regime of surveillance and refer to the drone airstrikes and the crowd killings of civilians due to the illusionary dimension of the drone footage.

Therefore, in the second chapter, the convergence of the spectacle with the surveillance does not lie in the use of a similar visual motif (such was the image of the face in the first chapter) but in

178 W.Benjamin, p.38

their appropriating similar advancing technological means for mechanical and digital reproducibility. Finally, regarding the illusionary or the real nature of the visual representations in the stencil image and the drone footage, I argue that visual literacy is indispensable to decipher the visual information in the drone footage, which highlights its illusionary dimension. While the street art stencil image is subjected to individual interpretations and has no intended reason to represent reality, only to encourage to cope with it or overcome it.

In the last chapter, I analyze the impact of the transferability of an artwork to the Western cities and inside the gallery environment. The transferability of the artwork coming from or related to the Palestinian territories does not refer to the multiple reproduction of the image of the artwork, but rather to the tangible transfer of an artwork and its exhibition in Western galleries and public spaces. The empirical material used for this purpose departs from the reproduction and paste up of JR's posters in European cities and includes the *Whole in the Wall* exhibition by Khalled Jarrar and the *Astro Noise* exhibition by Laura Poitras.

The overall intention of this chapter is to present ways of engaging the Western audience beyond the mere act of observing and viewing. Therefore, the challenges imposed to the visitors by the *Whole in the Wall* exhibition and the replica of a wall hindering their track evoked the bodily and sensory engagement. Finally, *Astro Noise* exhibition marked the transition from observing to becoming bodily engaged and to becoming observed. *Astro Noise* with its surprising ending where the visitors discovered that they have been surveilled throughout the whole gallery, introduces in the study the notion of the colonial boomerang effect.¹⁷⁹ According to this notion, the penetration of visualizing military techniques in the urban Western context takes place after having tested these techniques and equipment in the periphery front lines, in areas such as Palestine. With this acknowledgement in mind, the Western audience and society comes closer to the Palestinians.

Most probably, the conduction of fieldwork and the opportunity to visit the areas of interest and the exhibitions could have provided the study with different angles of approach. The firsthand experience of the daily circumstances of surveillance and the observation *in site* of the artworks could have given a more complete image of the situation. Additionally, more perspectives emerge as interesting aspects to be explored, such as the implications of the rising dark tourism in the area related to the street art proliferation.¹⁸⁰ Finally, a more consistent comparison and deeper engagement with the historical case of the street art on the Berlin Wall is proffered for a speculative examination on the potential future preservation of the Palestinian street artworks on the West Bank Wall. And this anticipation does not necessarily presuppose the demolition of the Wall.

179 M. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-6*, p. 103

180 Dark tourism is tourism in historical areas that are related to human adversities, tragedies and death.

At the time of writing the very last parts of this study, new events and relevant empirical material have appeared regarding the street art in Palestine contextualized within the military surrounding. On the 28th of July in 2018, Israeli soldiers arrested two Italian graffiti artists who were painting a mural of a teenager Palestinian girl on the West Bank Wall in Ramallah city.¹⁸¹ The girl had been jailed for many months based on accusations for assaulting an Israeli soldier. The Israeli authorities claimed that it is illegal to paint on the Wall, something which contradicts with the street art proliferation on the Wall during the last decade. In my view, these arrests function as a reminder of who rules the area and who decides for the content of the street artworks.

My innermost concern which I wished to highlight through the conduction and the findings of this study is twofold. The first aspect concerns the Palestinians' plight and its world-wide awareness through the street art representability. Through the re-contextualization of the Palestinian street artworks within the military environment I aimed to shed light in the risk of making 'history forgotten within culture.'¹⁸² Following Debord, '[spectacle's] function is to *use culture to bury all historical memory*.'¹⁸³ The vast recognizability of the street art spectacle from Palestinian territories hinders in a dazzling way the public awareness of the daily adversity in the area. Street art posters and souvenirs partake in the popular culture and disorient the Western beholder from the expansive surveillance and repression of the real life. Although, in the Western context, history and the perception of time might be considered as eventless and repeatable, in the Palestinian context, there is history written every day. Returning to the beginning of this study, the risk lurking in the spectacular dimension of the street art is to normalize the emergency of the area. Although, as I have argued, this risk might evade the initial intentions of the artists, but is rather a result of the consumer society.

The second aspect which I wanted to bring in surface refers to the Western context and departs from the notion of the colonial boomerang effect. Similar techniques and visualizing surveilling technologies, like the ones used in Palestine, are expanding and implemented in all kinds of societies, establishing a regime of surveillance and discipline, embellished with phantasmagoric spectacular images. The doctrine of the new military urbanism converts the urban landscapes into a inescapably controlled and digitally surveilled space. Therefore, I wish to highlight the need for artistic initiatives within the artistic movement of urban creativity which could critically reveal, resist or even subvert the expansion of the post-panopticon visual regime in the cities. Otherwise, it is rather questionable to which extent there will be indeed authentic creative activities in an urban military controlled environment.

181 J. Magid, *Italian graffiti artist arrested for mural of Ahd Tamimi on security barrier*, The Times of Israel, 2018. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/italian-graffiti-artist-arrested-for-mural-of-ahed-tamimi-on-security-barrier/> (accessed August 2018)

182 N. Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to the Visual Culture*, p. 264

183 G. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, p.106. Italics in the original

Appendix



Figure 1.1: A pair of portraits of two lawyers, pasted on a watchtower of the West Bank Wall. 2007.
Picture ©JR and Marco



Figure 1.2: From JR's project *Portrait of a Generation*. Montfermeil, Les Bosquets, 2004.
Picture ©JR and Ladj Ly.



Figure 1.3 :
On the bottom of the cover page of a biometric passport there is a distinctive sign which acknowledges that there is an embedded chip in the passport.



Figure 1.4 : Visual Illustration of Eigenface, an algorithm for facial biometric identification.



Figure 2.1 : *Balloon Girl*, Stencil Painting by Banksy, UK, 2002. Picture available at the official website. <http://banksy.co.uk/out.asp>



Figure 2. 2 : Series of images depicting material daily objects with the stencil image of the *NoTitle(BalloonGirl)* printed on them.



Figure 3.1 : On the left, *My God help me survive this deadly love*, 1990, mural by Dmitri Vrubel on the East Side Gallery, Berlin. On the right, a mural created by Lushsux on the West Bank Wall, 2017. Picture © Mussa Qawasama for Reuters.



Figure 3.2 : Installation view of *Whole in the Wall* exhibition by Khaled Jarrar at Ayyam gallery, London 2013. Picture available at <http://www.ayyamgallery.com/exhibitions/khaled-jarrar/images/24>



Figure 3.3 : Israeli troops scan walls in a refugee camp. Photo by Nir Kafri, 2003, from Eyal Weizman's essay 'Lethal Theory'.

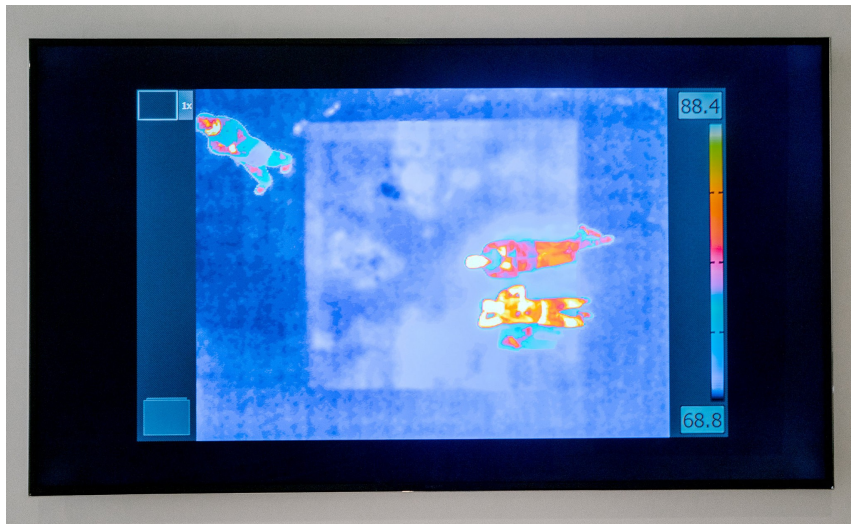


Figure 3.4 : *Bed Down Location* Installation in *Astro Noise* exhibition by Laura Poitras, at the Whitney Museum of American Art. 2016. Infrared sensors were placed in the ceiling of the room, surveilling the visitors. Pictures ©Jake Naughton for the NewYork Times.

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