

MURAL PAINTING - TOOL FOR COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN VALUES IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

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Abstract: Mural painting, as a form of public art, has a significant role in communicating and promoting human values in multicultural contexts. This artistic form, characterized by accessibility and visibility, becomes a favorable environment for social and cultural dialogue. In an era of cultural diversity, murals can facilitate understanding and appreciation of differences, contributing to social cohesion and promoting tolerance. The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of murals on social cohesion and tolerance in diverse communities.

Research methods include an interpretive analysis of the meanings of murals in different urban environments, as well as case studies that highlight the effects of these works on cultural perception and local identity.

The results of the study suggest that mural painting not only addresses universal themes, but also facilitates intercultural dialogue, contributing to a better understanding of cultural differences. The murals were seen as catalysts for community engagement, encouraging collaboration between diverse ethnic groups and promoting a sense of belonging.

The study's conclusions emphasize that mural painting is an effective tool of intercultural communication, able to promote fundamental human values and contribute to building more harmonious and inclusive societies. This form of artistic expression facilitates a constructive dialogue between cultures, essential for peaceful coexistence in contemporary multicultural societies.

Keywords: diversity, art, urban accent, interculturality, human values.

JEL Classification: F52, I21, I25, P36

Introduction

*Motto: „ Painting is poetry that is seen rather than felt,
and poetry is painting that is felt rather than seen.”*

Leonardo da Vinci

The semiotic and communicational perspective on art has given the traditional concept of artistic communication deeper and more applied interpretations and approaches. The artistic image is a complex sign that organically unites expression and meaning, a sign capable of awakening a chain of

feelings and mental representations in the consciousness of the receiver through its expressive form and original composition.

Murals, as a form of artistic expression, have been used throughout history as a means of non-verbal communication and have had a significant impact on the cultures and societies in which they were created. These works of art, created on walls or other large surfaces, not only aesthetically enrich their surroundings, but also serve as a channel through which ideas, values and narratives are conveyed to the community.

In the context of nonverbal communication, murals become a complex visual language, able to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, facilitating a deeper understanding of collective identity and human experiences.

The aim of this study is to assess the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of young people towards murals in the Republic of Moldova, including their role as a form of nonverbal communication and as a tool to promote cultural and artistic values. The study of murals as a form of nonverbal communication involves an interdisciplinary analysis, integrating perspectives from fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychology and art history. These artistic works reflect not only the aesthetics and artistic techniques of the era in which they were created, but also the social, political and economic context, providing a window into the values and beliefs of the communities in question. From prehistoric cave paintings to contemporary mural art, these artistic expressions have been used to document historical events, celebrate cultural traditions or convey social and political messages.

In this paper, we aim to explore the role of murals in nonverbal communication, analyzing how they contribute to the construction of cultural identity and facilitate social dialogue. We will examine relevant examples and the messages conveyed, as well as the impact these works have on community perception and interaction. Through this approach, we aim to highlight the importance of murals as communication tools and to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of art in society.

Specialists in the field state that "...the artistic experience of the 20th century, dominated by the feverish search for new means of expression, the complication of formal structures, the increased signifying capacity of artistic language, by putting it into new configurations, has distanced art from the classical language, producing a rupture in the plane of expression, which subsequently caused a rupture between art and the public. This gave rise to the problem of the accessibility of art, which is in fact a problem of understanding the specific language of art." (Podlesnaia, 2015)

Today, art is approached as a form of communication, as a system of signs, a language encoding a specific informational content, a bundle of meanings, which it transmits. Artistic communication has particularities that distinguish it from ordinary and scientific communication, sometimes even radically. Street art is a cultural and artistic phenomenon that has gained considerable popularity in recent decades. Born at the intersection between art and society, it offers a free and unconventional form of expression that transforms urban landscapes into an art gallery accessible to all.

Its origins are deeply rooted in countercultural movements and the desire to give a voice to marginalized communities. If traditional art was reserved for the elite, because it was difficult enough to understand how colors were applied to canvases with paintbrushes, urban art came as a response to this exclusivity - it emerged and developed in public spaces, where messages could be seen and appreciated by anyone, regardless of social status.

Urban art, "with deep roots in countercultural and protest movements, has evolved into a powerful means of expressing the thoughts, emotions and aspirations of communities around the world. A

prime example is the "Favela Painting" project in Brazil, where artists Jeroen Koolhaas and Dre Urhahn collaborated with residents to paint the facades of buildings. Through art, these communities were able to convey a message of resilience and hope, challenging the negative stereotypes associated with favelas." (Ștefan, 2024)

One of the most significant roles of urban art is its ability to serve as a form of protest and social awareness. Urban artists use city walls as platforms to address critical issues, from social and racial inequalities to human rights violations and climate change. In this sense, urban art becomes a mirror of society, reflecting both its beauty and its imperfections.

Research methods

The main research methods were: questionnaire survey, comparative analysis and content analysis of empirical materials. This study involved about 110 respondents, first year students of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, representing various faculties and specialties (Finance and Banking - 50 students, Information Technologies, Applied Informatics and Cybernetics - 30 students, Business and Administration - 10 students, Human Resources Management and Economics - 20 students).

The questionnaire included 19 questions, of which 15 closed and 4 open questions. The survey was conducted online, using the Google Forms questionnaire platform, the aim was to identify existing perceptions and attitudes towards the variables investigated.

The questionnaire was conducted between September 4 and September 17, 2024. A thematic questionnaire was distributed to the students in order to: identify the respondents' level of familiarization with the murals, determine the impact on national and international cultural identity, identify social messages and themes that would have a multicultural influence.

At the same time, the focus was on determining the strengths of the murals and identifying their role in nonverbal communication. Other aspects of thematic interest are related to the history of murals in the Republic of Moldova, their notoriety and their perception as street art to promote beauty in the public space.

Results and discussions

Street art is increasingly being recognized as a creative way to reinvigorate urban landscapes, transforming concrete walls into colourful and lively works. The vibrant energy of the murals is reflected in the variety of creative designs found on city streets. This perfect combination illustrates the city's dynamic mix of modern and traditional culture.

The capital of the Republic of Moldova also stands out for its diversity of murals. Chisinau's Botanica district has the most murals, which can certainly be easily discovered. The sector is home to a variety of incredible works by artists from both home and abroad, such as Dmitrii Potapov, Radu Dumbravă, Inna Jeleascova, Victor Zucker and Sergiu Aftenev, Rafał Roskowiński and Wojciech Woniak etc. Identifying these places of interest is an excellent and accessible way to explore new emotions. Thus, the gigantic mural with the portrait of the Dacian king Decebal with his warriors, painted on a block on Decebal Boulevard, comes with a message of manliness, bravery and encouragement. The 220-square-meter painting "The Column of the Nation" is the largest historical wall painting in Moldova. The "Butterflies of Freedom" mural was created by a group of Polish artists as part of a partnership between Moldova, Poland and Romania. The painting "The Rights of the Child" symbolically refers to the concepts of the path of life and freedom. Suggestively named "Hope", the wall painting is dedicated to childhood, dreams and aspirations for a European future. The story "The Old Maid and

the Old Man's Daughter", painted on a block in the same area, was unveiled next to a children's playground.

The project of decorating the blocks in the Botanica sector with monumental works of art aims to revitalize the social and cultural life of the area, as well as to promote urban art.

Returning to our research, we find that, for the most part, respondents are unfamiliar with murals (about 62%), while the rate of those who know about these aspects of street culture is 35%. At the same time, the majority of the students definitely state that murals are a form of nonverbal communication (about 92% overall).

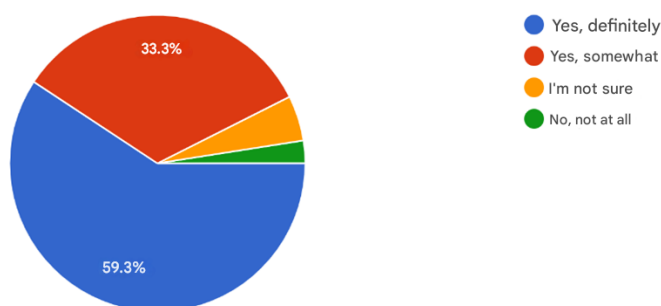


Figure 1. Murals as a form of nonverbal communication

Source: authors based on survey results

We note that most students consider the strengths of a mural to be its vibrant colors, imposing size, fine details, powerful message, innovative artistic style and harmonious integration into the environment. At the same time, originality, originality of idea, idea, values promoted, visual impact continue the string of mural accents.

In this context, the respondents were asked if they know any famous murals from Chisinau or other cities in Moldova. Only about 40% said that they knew about them, and more than half had not heard of or seen any notorious murals.

But no conversation about street art in Chisinau would be complete without mentioning the newest mural unveiled on May 24, 2024. The kaleidoscopic "Olympic Dream" mural is dedicated to our athletes who competed in the 2024 Paris Olympics. It represents the values of sport: discipline, perseverance and team spirit.

"The mural was unveiled on an apartment block on 6 Stefan cel Mare Boulevard in Chisinau. It covers an area of about 400 square meters and was completed in eight days by artists Dmitry Potapov and Victor Zucker, with the involvement of a volunteer from Romania." (Beșleaga, 2024) This work of art celebrates the courage, dedication and passion of the Olympians. "Every detail is carefully crafted to capture the spirit and determination of our champions. Each member of the Olympic Team who will represent our country at the Olympic Games in Paris will have their name written on the mural," (Inaugurarea oficială a picturii murale „Visul Olimpic”, 2024) emphasizes the National Olympic Committee.



Source: <https://olympic.md/inaugurarea-oficiala-a-picturii-murale-visul-olimpic/>

"From an audience's perspective, art facilitates a deeper and more empathetic understanding of everything around us. It can broaden the horizons of perception and enrich the soul and intellectual capacities of the individual. From the artist's perspective, art is a versatile and elevated tool for expressing the self and reality as perceived through the filter of human experience". (Aga, 2024) Therefore, talking about cultural identity and the promotion of national and universal values, the majority of the respondents stated that murals can be tools to promote them (87.6%). The attitude of young people towards cultural heritage is generally one of protection, pride and responsibility. Respondents are aware that they are responsible for the protection of human heritage values and show a proactive and involved attitude.

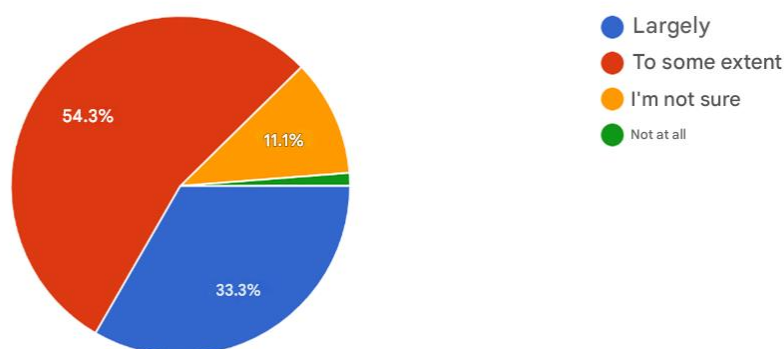


Figure 2. Murals as a tool to promote national and universal values

Source: authors based on survey results

"Visual art is a very good tool to convey messages, to interest and involve young people in activities based on sensitive topics, such as gender equality or combating violence against girls and women, etc.", (Bordian, 2021) said EVA project manager Polina Panainte. This project involved young people from several localities in the republic, who painted 24 murals conveying social messages.

Our respondents confirm that murals are an effective social tool, with 82.7% saying that murals can be used to educate or raise awareness on various social issues.

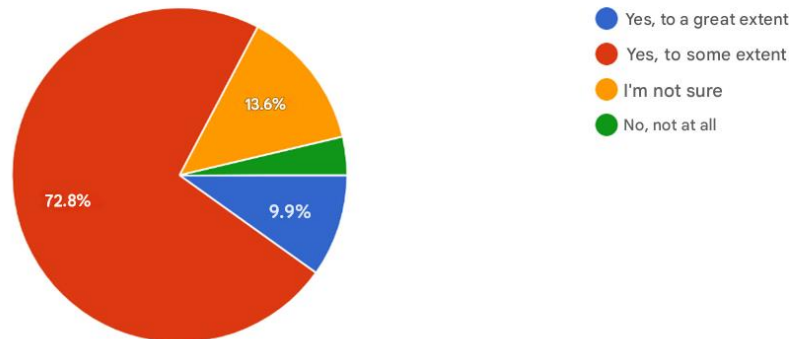


Figure 3. Murals as a way to educate or sensitize the public on various social issues

Source: authors based on survey results

When asked about the social messages that could be conveyed by the murals, respondents particularly mentioned contexts related to equality, justice, cultural diversity and solidarity, friendship, acceptance, tolerance, family, promoting traditions and history, pride in country, protecting the environment. They could raise awareness on issues such as climate change, human rights, social inclusion and the fight against discrimination. Messages could also promote peace, intercultural dialog and the importance of community, encouraging people to engage in positive civic action. Social signifiers also refer to strong, positive messages, such as natural landscapes symbolizing harmony with the environment, portraits of people who have made significant contributions to the community, or scenes representing cultural diversity. Also well seen are abstract or geometric murals that add an element of mystery and invite reflection. Images that express progress, creativity and universal unity.

At the same time, 95% of the students are of the opinion that murals can promote beauty and art in public spaces and can positively influence the perception of urban spaces (87.7%).

Regrettably, about 91.3% of the respondents have little or no knowledge of the history of murals in the Republic of Moldova. In this context, we report that in 2012, Rafał Roskowiński and Wojciech Woniak from the School of Mural Painting in Gdańsk, together with the Moldovan artist Alberto Șveț, realized a first mural painting on a wall of the block of flats on bd. Dacia no. 28 in Chisinau, with the theme "Solidarity". The work is one of the first contemporary artworks to be present in Chisinau's public space. (Cember, 2013)

Only 22.2% of respondents have occasionally or rarely participated in mural-related events and activities. There are a number of reasons why people are reluctant to engage with this type of art, but the most common is that urban art is mistaken for vandalism. Therefore, the role of street art is mainly to differentiate the aesthetics, the beautification of a city's building facades and public space from their destruction or degradation over time.

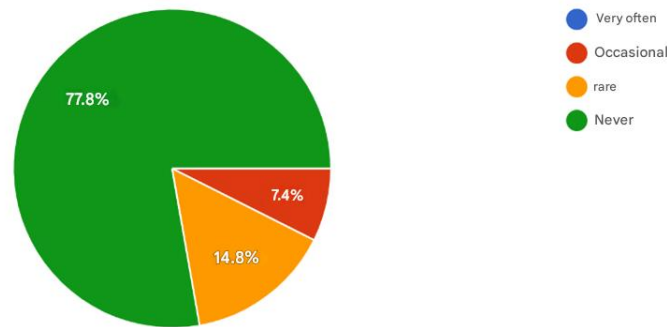


Figure 4. Participation in mural-related events or activities

Source: authors based on survey results

In many cities around the world, local authorities have begun to work with urban artists to revitalize public spaces and encourage creativity. Public art programs, which support the creation of murals and art installations, have become increasingly popular. Street art festivals also attract thousands of visitors each year, contributing to the recognition and appreciation of this art form. 75.3% of ASEM students believe that local authorities should support murals and support these artistic endeavors to breathe new life into concrete walls. Such an urban accent is, de facto, "a detail pronounced through line, color, size, shape or location". (Șincari, 2019)

Conclusions

"Art is a very important channel of communication in any society. It mirrors the realities that surround us and through it the intangible and perhaps less obvious aspects of humanity are documented and expressed. In addition to its introspective character, which helps us to know ourselves better both individually and collectively, art can express and define the ideals and visions of a society." (Aga, 2024) With this in mind, we present the conclusions drawn from this study:

Murals are seen as a form of cultural expression. They reflect the cultural identity of communities and can convey profound messages about traditions, values and beliefs. They serve as a medium for visual communication that transcends language barriers, facilitating intercultural interpretation.

Universal human values are also promoted through murals. Many wall paintings deal with general themes such as love, solidarity, respect and human rights. By representing these values, murals can help to create a sense of belonging and promote social cohesion in diverse communities.

Street art is also perceived as a social tool. Murals are often used as forms of activism, addressing social and political issues. They can raise public awareness of inequalities, discrimination and other challenges, thus stimulating intercultural discussions and promoting social change.

Community interaction and public involvement can be achieved through street art. The creation and appreciation of murals often involves community participation, making them tools for dialog and collaboration. This participatory process can strengthen social bonds and encourage mutual respect between different cultures.

The impact on intercultural perception is confirmed by the murals. Murals can influence perceptions and attitudes towards other cultures, helping to reduce stereotypes and prejudices. By representing cultural diversity and shared human experiences, they can promote a better understanding and appreciation of intercultural differences.

These findings underline the importance of murals not only as art forms, but also as essential tools for communicating and promoting human values in diverse societies.

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