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REVOLUTIONARY MURALS OF IRAN IN STREET ART OF THE ARAB-ISLAMIC WORLD COUNTRIES

Abstract. The article deals with the street art objects of the countries of the Arab-Islamic world that have undergone revolutionary changes and are under the influence of the occupation regime. First of all, murals and graffiti of Iran are defined as works propagating the mood of protest of the population, perpetuate the memory of the heroes of revolutionary and military events in this country. Moreover, it was performed the comparison of Tehran's murals with the street art of Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, Palestine, Sudan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Armenia. Common features of the street art of certain Arab-Muslim countries have been identified along with states with similar political problems.

Key words: street art, murals, the Arab-Islamic world, Iran, twentieth – twenty first centuries.

Introduction. Street art, as a means of mass influence, is often associated with the American protests of the black population for the equality of "blacks" and "whites" during 1950–1960. Such activity holds a very significant position in Arab-Islamic street art since murals in these territories are almost the only type of visual art. Thus, the coverage of revolutionary and political slogans, propaganda and perpetuation of historical events here is carried out by painting the grey walls.

From the middle of the twentieth century to the present day, a wave of revolutionary uprisings has captured most of the states of the Islamic world, primarily the Gulf countries, mostly Iran, where the Great Islamic Revolution took place in 1979, which provoked a long-standing conflict with the United States, which continues to this day. In this country the "Arab spring" of 2011 broke out, which led to protests and revolutionary uprisings in Palestine, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, Egypt and the like.

As a reaction to these events, local and world–famous underground artists actively paint the streets of Iranian cities with the scenes that highlight the theme of military operations. For example, images of the heroes of the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), mass uprisings and political upheavals (a mural that reproduces the flag of Iran with the Supreme Leadership, which looks at the martyrs of the Iran-Iraq war). Among other things, the street art of this country is popular with portraits of the spiritual leader and leader of the state, Imam Khomeini, pilots Ali Akbar Shiroodi and Ahmad Keshwari, leading military personnel of the day of military operations with Iraq. Thus, the latter are immortalized in Murali "Martyrdom is the art of the people of God" (Tehran, Iran, 2008). This mural depicts two military personnel on the background of military events (fig. 1.2).

Besides, it should be noted the works of artists covering similar problems in other countries of the Arab-Islamic world. Among them, it is worth highlighting a master named Alaa Awad, famous for the plot murals along Mohammed Mahmoud Street in the author's "neo-pharaonic style", illuminating the history and traditions of Egypt (Cairo. Egypt. 2012) (fig. 3).

A street artist under the pseudonym #Lushsux in 2015 created graffiti with a portrait of Donald Trump on the Palestinian wall. In this mural, the US president is depicted in profile in a black suit and kippah. He holds his hand on the wall. The statement "I will build you a brother" is added next to his portrait. This picture of the leader of the United States resembles his photo from his visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. And the Palestine residents insist that this graffiti illustrates the president's plans to build the same wall on the boundary with Mexico (Palestinian wall, 2015) (fig.4) [9].

The essence of the political content of individual murals in the countries of the Arab-Islamic world so far affects the consequences of which its creators should expect. In this regard, special attention was paid to the work of T. R. Kray, "The art of risk/risk of art: what makes street art political?" [7]. The author reveals the features of graffiti and murals, drawing a clear distinction between political and non-political works of art. He grounds his research on open conversations with world-famous protagonists – the main creators of such artworks. In this case, the researcher identifies two principal criteria for determining the political component of a work of art: the first is common, it contains the geographical context of artwork; the second is structural, it considers risk as a decisive sign of the absence of complete ambiguity.

Thus, the author analyses the features of the location of murals, the subject of images and their semantic load. Based on this, he offers a "model" of

political work, clearly shows the indivisible connection of contemporary art with politics.

The peculiarities of graffiti and murals of Iran and their place in "political" art are considered by Narciss M. Sohrabi in her work "Walls and Places: Political Murals of Iran" [11]. The author focuses on the peculiarities of the placing of street artworks by local artists. She considers Tehran's street art as a specific driving force, expressing the influence of the political elite on the population, that is what the professional artists do to follow the orders of the authorities. Narciss M. Sohrabi also focuses on the non-laboratory works of amateur artists who work without permission and aim to illuminate the moods of ordinary people and urge society to solve pressing problems. Most of them are similar to tags, so they are performed in calligraphic style.

Among recent publications, we should emphasize the work of Iranian authors H. E. Chehabi & Fotini Christia "The Art of State Persuasion: Iran's Post-revolutionary Murals". In it, the researchers analyse the future of murals in the context of contemporary Iranian political culture [3]. The mentioned authors consider the relevance of political wall paintings as an open issue, which largely depends on the further trajectory of Iran's domestic policy, as well as on its interaction with other countries in the international arena.

Based on the preceding, it is worth noting that the problems of revolutionary murals and graffiti have recently gained great resonance. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to works that cover the chronology of significant rebel actions and coups in the countries of the Arab–Islamic world and states suffering from military aggression of neighbouring countries.

The interpretation of the main material. Now the Republic of Iran (formerly known as Persia) mostly has the Islamic population. Meanwhile, the outlined state remains one of the significant centres of development of the Gulf countries, rooted in the achievements of the high culture of the East of the Ancient World. Since it is located at the intersection between the Mediterranean Sea and Central Asia and is one of the most powerful states in the Middle East, it combines in its culture the achievements of the high literary language of the Arab-Islamic world "Farsi" and the foundations of the Koran.

Along the way, it is worth noting that powerful dynasties ruled Persia from 559 BC. E, starting with the Achaemenid clan who professed Zoroastrianism. This period was the state-forming and most style developing in the art of the country. The culture of Persia during the reign of the Achaemenids was formed

over two centuries by the joint efforts of the Iranian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian peoples and became general to all the dependent states. In the end, due to this synthesis of cultures, the proclamation of the power of Persia and the greatness of royal power became a peculiarity of Iranian art. As early as 637, Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula broke into Iran and gradually captured the whole region during 35 years, disposing more and more Iranians to accept Islam. During the eleventh century, the Seljuk Turks conquered Iran and provided new opportunities for great Persian artists, scholars and poets. But already in 1219, Genghis Khan and the Mongols entered Persia and caused significant damage to the whole country. At the same time, entire cities were destroyed before the period of chaos, which was continued by another conqueror Amir Timur, better known as Tamerlane.

The struggle for rule and its devastating consequences for the population continued until the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which was caused by the response of the people to the actions of the ruling elite of that time. People went out to the streets of Tehran and other cities with calls "Death to Shah" and called for the completion of the monarchical system of government. And this protest got its consequences on September 8, 1979, when there were riots on Jale Square in Tehran. Then, as a result of military operations, the government of the country attracted military equipment and ground forces, killed about 300 people [6]. Since then, the visual art of this country has been missing for more than 30 years. As a result of the accumulation of diverse views on events in the state, new murals arose.

At the present stage, Iran is in a permanent state of conflict with the United States (the reason is the critical attitude for supporting terrorism and imposing economic sanctions against Iran, the Iran-Iraq war). This socio-political situation in the country also influenced the development of art, in which street art occupies a significant place, as a form of communication with city residents. Therefore, the grey buildings of city streets are filled with bright frescoes of a political nature. Two general groups are distinguished among the latter: these are, first of all, wall plot drawings expressing people's beliefs and canvases illuminating the ideas of authoritarian rule in the country.

Bringing art into the public sphere is one of the most important characteristics of murals. In numerous societies – especially ones, such as postrevolutionary Iran, that are highly politicized – they tend to express the ideological values of the state because they are almost invariably commissioned and sponsored by the government or its affiliated organs. Art,

and in this specific case, murals, can perform the role of a vital medium for the expression of ideological, economic, social, and cultural change.

So, according to a street artist from Iran named GhalamDar, walls in this state is a powerful means of disseminating the media. The creation of such murals was spread since the 80s of the twentieth century when the society was at the epicentre of a sharp political struggle. In the massive drawings, methodically located around Tehran, the artists depicted the leaders of the Iranian revolution of 1979, symbols of martyrdom and Shiite Islamic iconography, most of which had been commissioned by state authorities [5].

"Iranian art has always been urban," said Susana Babai, a teacher of Iranian and Islamic art at the Curto Institute of Art. After all, drawings aimed at preserving the memory and exaltation of the personality, which made a significant contribution to the historical development of the republic, play an important role in Iran's street art. Almost half a dozen metropolitan murals dedicated to the heroes who died in combats in the Iran-Iraq war of 1980–1988. The most extensive examples are the murals "Soldiers of the Islamic Revolution" and "Down with the USA", on which the American flag is depicted as a symbol of war (fig. 5) [12].

The fact that after the 1979 revolution, the conflict between the United States and Iran continued to increase, that is also proved by the work of local artists. A vivid example of this is the anti-American and revolutionary image on the old building of the US Embassy in Tehran. It is the mural with the image of the statue of freedom, created in the form of a terrible figure with the face of death, which makes it possible to plunge into the depths of the tragic situation of Iran in the early 80s (fig. 6).

Iranian murals are, first of all, oversized images designed to convey a socio-political message through memorable images based on cultural achievements and executed on large areas of the walls. The vast majority of the streets of the capital lie either north-south or east-west. In the eastern and western parts of the city, most houses are built in places to avoid direct sunlight. On this basis, a large number of "blind" walls are released and the local artists use them as a canvas for painting. Such murals, to a greater extent, are created by semi-professional artists, who perform their drawings without aerosols, and they remind classical paintings.

It is worth noting that now Tehran's street art, along with expressive artistic images, is filled with calligraphic works. The street artist under the tag name A1one is well-known by his peculiar calligraphic style graffiti. As the principal feature of his work, he considers the interpretation of the

word "truth" (Khakikat) in various ways. Based on traditional calligraphy, such works deepen the viewer in the cultural heritage of Iran. Nevertheless, they are made with contemporary interpretations and created, as a rule, using coloured aerosols or brushes of different thickness (fig. 7) [12].

One of the less common types of street art in Tehran is screen graffiti; over the past 20 years, they have become the foremost culture of modern youth. The representatives of this type of street art, work for a specific target audience and promote their ideology of an anti-political and anti-hegemonic nature. For example, an unknown artist under the tag names "Black Hand" and "Iranian Banksy" only draws his works at night on the walls of roadside buildings. They highlight the problems and phenomena that Iranians face today. The fame was brought to him work by his satirical calligraphic translation of the famous political line "Rumi", which promotes: "Without everyone, life goes on, life will not last without you" [12].

In this statement, the graffiti's author highlights the relevant mission of every citizen in the development of the country. At the same time, he focuses his attention on the weighty part of conscious heart-searching of citizens.

In general, it is worth noting that in the central parts of cities, as a rule, there are murals that depict warriors and famous political personalities. These works are performed by professional artists who have official permission to implement the order. But in the suburbs of cities and in roadside zones, most of the illegal writers, beginners and amateurs present their works. It is because local authorities are trying to demonstrate the courage of national heroes and to attract the attention of tourists to the relevant external political confrontations of the country.

When analysing the street art of this region, first of all, it is worth paying attention to the street art of neighbouring states and those that have a similar problematic background. Street art in Jordan, as in pre-defined states, is divided into murals, graffiti and calligraphic inscriptions. The country mostly has the Islamic population, but Christians and the persons relating to other confessions and religions live here. Despite this, local artists paint people with their faces half-closed, but with their eyes closed to honour the religious feelings of Muslims. Jordanian artists also do not forget about the issue of equal rights for women and men in the Arab world, to which a significant number of murals is devoted ("Strength" by Jonathan Darby, 2016; "Create Equality" by Kevin Ledo, 2017). Most of them are performed in residential areas of cities, or on concrete fences roadside parts (fig. 8, 9).

Graffiti, as a way "never to forget" extraordinary events, are created in Egypt by a new generation born of the revolution, developed during the "Arab spring" (2011 uprising in Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Tunisia, Iraq, Yemen, Sudan). Their art inclines to record everything that happens in the country. Graffiti in these territories is a popular art movement. It depicts the provocative paintings which are refused by local governments with tough acts, and it gives artists more courage. Thus, opposing the authorities, the artists turned the city walls of Cairo into a political rally that never ends but spreads more and more throughout the country.

According to local journalist Soraya Morayef, literally two years ago, graffiti in this area was a rare occurrence, it was from then on, that artists began to record crimes of the local regime. The local street artists are divided into two groups: those who work independently, and those who are members of the art collective. But the first and second ones remind by their creative activity to the state leadership – nothing can pass by the eyes of the people. So, street art artists in the indicated country fill their "canvases" with portraits of activists. In particular, such as Ahmed Harare, who was blinded in both eyes in separate protesting incidents during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution to see his country free (fig. 10) [4].

Murad Subay, a Yemeni street artist, can share the experience of creating portraits of victims of political repression. With his creative activity, he defends the rights of the people in the struggle for justice. The street art in Palestine is notable for the massive spread of stories on political subjects. Most of this art is a social protest, filled with irony and black humour, reflecting the Palestinian identity in the occupied territories. JR, the street art collage artist French photographer, on the territory of this country is using portraits in his creative practice, as a way to reconcile the inhabitants of the two warring states of Israel and Palestine. At the same time, he selects portraits of people who are representatives of the same professions and portrays them as equal. Since 2002, the rule of Israel began to create a wall of demarcation to prevent Palestinian fighters from entering its territory. Now residents continue to suffer through the fence because checkpoints such as the one in the Arabian village of Qalandiya between the Palestinian city of Ramallah and Jerusalem make their movement extremely difficult.

However, artists from the city of Kalkiriya found it and use it as a canvas to express their creative ideas and cover social and political messages. Any resident of the city who has paint and brushes can leave his message in this

place. In some sections of the wall, in particular, in the Bethlehem part, the well-known British street artist Banksy left his message in 2005 and 2007. By this, he drew the attention of the world community to the problems of the Palestinians, and it became an impetus to the creative expression of Israeli artists on the opposite side [1; 9].

Another country suffering from military aggression from a neighbour in 2014 was Ukraine. As a result of the struggle for the right of the Ukrainian state to move to the European community, a mass demonstration took place in Kyiv on Independence Square, which over time was called the "Revolution of Dignity". For participating in it on the night of November 30, 2013, the local government resorted to harsh measures to suppress the protest. Such actions of the ruling elite led to the mass killings of the protestants.

One of the first victims was Sergey Nigoyan, a Ukrainian revolutionary of Armenian descent. In honour of the hero of the Kyiv uprising, near the place of the tragedy along Mykhailivska Street, a mural with his portrait was created as a memory of the outstanding Maydanovite, Hero of the Heaven's Hundred. The author of this mural was the Portuguese graffiti artist, Alexandre Farto (the tag name Vhils), who works in the technique of upholstering old plaster on the wall plane. The portrait of Sergei Nigoyan was made in this technique. The specificity of this creative method is an unusual manner of the artist and his extraordinary vision at the creation of this mural. Vhils works with the call – "destroying you build", that is, to create a new one, you need to destroy the old. Actually, on such ideals, the Ukrainian revolution of 2014 was built (fig. 11) [8].

The underground artists of the Republic of Sudan in North Africa stand for the right to freedom of expression. Even during the fall of the reign of President Omar al-Bashir, Sudanese artists created a revolution of the country in murals and portraits on the walls at the army's headquarters in the city of Khartoum.

So, the grey walls, next to the complex, where there are thousands of demonstrators, filled with images of flags, large-scale clenched fists and victory signs, which symbolize the protests during the popular uprising, which put an end to the rule of Al-Bashir. In general, such manifestations of opposition in mural art are inherent in any country, regardless of the situation and time. After all, mural painting plays the role of a memorial sign and semantic load on an ordinary resident of the city [14].

Now murals play a significant role in the countries, which are in a permanent revolutionary state, most of them belong to the counties of the Arab-Islamic world.

"It was unimaginable to paint any wall without a permit, let alone around the army building, but this revolution has changed everything", said Lotfy Abdel Fattah, Sudan fine art specialist. "Even if it's wiped out someday, the drawings will leave an everlasting mark on people's minds" [14].

However, the street art of the countries bordering Iran has only been actively developed over the last 5 years. In particular, the plots created by artists working in Azeburjan and Turkey do not have such a pronounced revolutionary or political burden. The murals of these states are, first and foremost, devoted to highlighting the characteristics of local culture, the importance of enlightenment in the lives of ordinary people and the love of their native land. These signs are perfectly combined in the diptych of murals in Baku on the two side walls of houses on the street. Fatali Khan Hoysky, 11 local artist Georgi Kurinov. He portrayed images of women and men in national costumes, bringing together the traditions of music, clothing, cuisine, history and architecture of Azerbaijanis (fig. 12) [10].

However, Istanbul's mural art is full of various works by world-class street painters (Fintan Maggie, Jazz, Pixel Pancho, Inti, etc.). Their works reflect a subjective individual vision of the traditions and outlook of the Turks. In particular, in symmetrical "One-on-one" murals by the artist under the pseudo Jazz. In this work, the artist highlights his own author's interpretation of the struggle of two Turkish warriors (fig. 13) [6].

Instead, the street painting of neighboring Armenia is extremely similar to the genre of revolutionary poster, but its means of expression are somewhat different. Thus, street art in Yerevan manifests itself in the form of messages in the form of collages on the walls of educational establishments, subways and pedestrian zones. In this way, local artists cover comments related to all popular political, religious and historical figures [15]. Usually they perform their graffiti works in the so-called "street exhibitions", one of which in 2018 was the open-air gallery "Kond" near the local gas station on the street. Saryana. In these drawings, the artists reproduce image symbols in the form of geometric shapes. In particular, triangles resembling Ararat peaks or squares or houses-squares (fig. 14).

Conclusion. In general, it should be noted that murals, to a certain extent, are a reflection of the political, religious and socio-cultural crisis in the country. First of all, they are called upon to expose certain serious phenomena of the society concerning residents of the countries, in particular, the mentioned states of the Arab-Islamic world. Traditions, political repressions, heroic

figures, the struggle for the equality of women and men, the features of the Islamic faith and the pressing problems of humanity are the main topics for the mural art of the regions of the Arab-Islamic world and countries suffering from military aggression.

So, in the murals of Iran, we observe a particular system of graphic images, which has its structure and illustrates the urgent problems of the country. Among them there are many murals with the portraits of the heroes of the Islamic revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. Political images have become widespread; they are the writers' response to relations between the United States of America and the Iranian government. Of these, amateur graffiti took a significant place as a means of free expression of their thoughts by the ordinary residents of the cities.

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Şemeneva Yulia (Ukrayna)

Ərəb-müsəlman dünyasının küçə sənətində İranın inqilabi simvolları

Məqalədə inqilabi dəyişikliklərə məruz qalan və işğalçı rejimin təsiri altında olan ərəb-müsəlman ölkələrinin küçə sənət obyektlərindən bəhs olunur. Əvvəla, İranın divarları və graffiti, bu ölkədə baş verən inqilabi və hərbi hadisələrin qəhrəmanlarının xatirəsini əbədiləşdirmək kimi əhalinin etiraz əhval-ruhiyyəsini təbliğ edən əsərlər olaraq təyin edilmişdir. Eyni zamanda, Tehranın küçə sənətini İordaniya, Misir, Yəmən, Fələstin, Sudan, Ukrayna, Azərbaycan, Türkiyə və Ermənistanın küçə sənəti ilə qismən müqayisə aparılır. Bənzər siyasi problemləri olan dövlətlərlə yanaşı, ərəb-müsəlman dünyasının bu ölkələrində küçə sənətinin xüsusiyyətlərinin ümumi cəhətləri tapıldı.

Açar sözlər: küçə sənəti, murallar, Ərəb müsəlman dünyası, İran, XX–XXI əsr.

Шеменёва Юлия (Украина)

Революционные муралы Ирана в стрит-арте стран арабо-мусульманского мира

В статье рассматриваются стрит-арт-обьекты арабо-мусульманських стран, которые подверглись революционным изменениям и находятся

под влиянием оккупационного режима. Прежде всего, определены муралы и граффити Ирана, как произведения, пропагандирующие настроения протеста населения, такие что увековечивают память о героях революционных и военных событий в указанной стране. При этом совершенно сравнения муралов Тегерана с уличным искусством Иордании, Египта, Йемена, Палестины, Судана, Украины, Азейбарджана, Турции и Армении. Найдено общие черты специфики стрит-арта указанных стран арабо-мусульманского мира наряду с государствами что имеют похожие политические проблемы.

Ключевые слова: стрит-арт, муралы, арабо-мусульманський мир, Иран, XX–XXI век.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Unkown author. A mural depicting portraits of the spiritual leaders of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei and Ruhallah Musavi Khomeini. Tehran, Cavusier, Mirmadam Boulevard. 2006.
Photo of the site // http://fotini.mit.edu/sites/default/files/images/Chehabi_Christia.

Fig. 2. Unkown author. Martyrdom is the art of the people of God. Tehran, Iran, 2008.
Photo of the site // https://quintinlake.photoshelter.com/image/I0000ypGBNaWWkJw?fbclid=IwAR2i4-nDNRc5drrk6-YtsrsiQF2c_CL73qPgH3pfJFEQ15Xo0gADexlG7L4.

Fig. 3. Alaa Awad. The Death of Humanity. Mohammed Mahmud street. Cairo, Egypt. 2012.
Photo of the site // http://alaa-awad.com/murals_mohamed-mahmoud-street_cairo_egypt. .

Fig. 4. #Lushsux. Image of Donald Trump. Palestinian wall. 2015.
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Fig. 5. Christiane Gruber. Down with the USA. Tehran. 2007.
Photo of the site // https://theculturetrip.com/middle-east/iran/articles/paintings-and-propaganda-the-best-street-art-in-tehran.

Fig. 6. Unkown author. A mural depicting a Statue of Liberty on the wall of the former US Embassy in Tehran. 2015.
Photo of the site // https://news.yahoo.com/irans-iconic-anti-us-murals-way-generation-artwork-191634753.html.

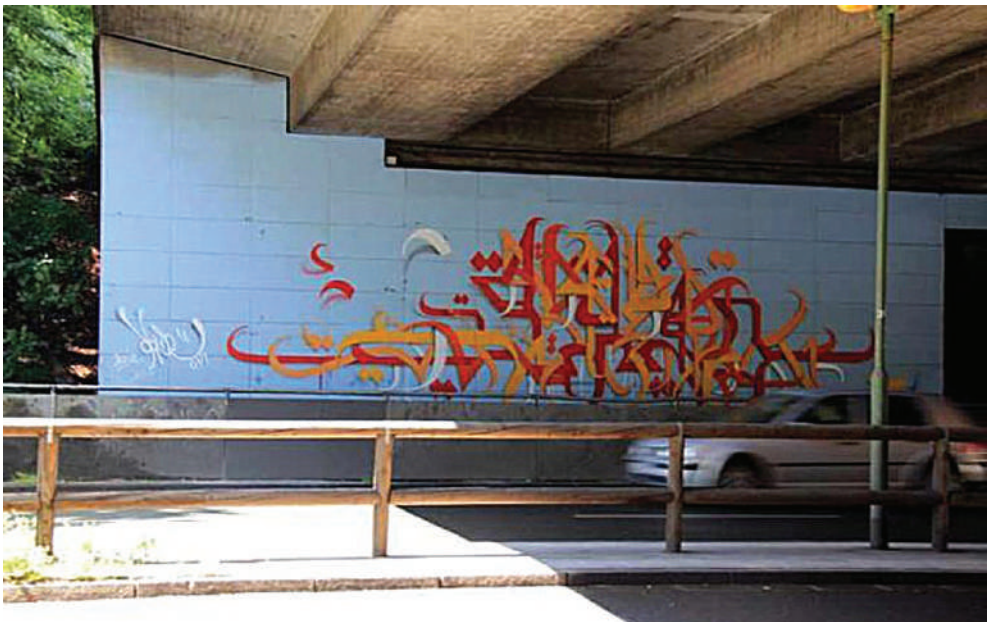

Fig. 7. A1one. Truth. Tehran. 2012.
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Fig. 8. Jonathan Darby. Strength. Jordan. 2016.
Photo of the site // http://www.urbanitewebzine.com/2016/12/19/strength-freedom-thought-murals-jonathan-darby-jordan/.

Fig. 9. Kevin Ledo. Create equality. Jordan. 2017.
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Fig. 10. Unkown author. Mural with the image of blind activist Ahmed Harar on the street Mohammed Mahmud. Cairo. 2012.
Photo of the site // https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/egypts-murals-are-more-than-just-art-they-are-a-form-of-revolution-36377865.

Fig. 11. Alexandre Farto (Vhils). Portrait of Sergiy Nigoyan. Kyiv, Ukraine. 2014.
Photo of the site // https://photo.unian.ua/photo/643845-portret-sergeya-nigoyana.

Fig. 12. Georgy Kurinov. Mural depicting the pattern of But. Baku. 2019.
Photo of the site // https://www.urban.az/city/pervye-muraly-v-baku-kakie-i-gde-6958.