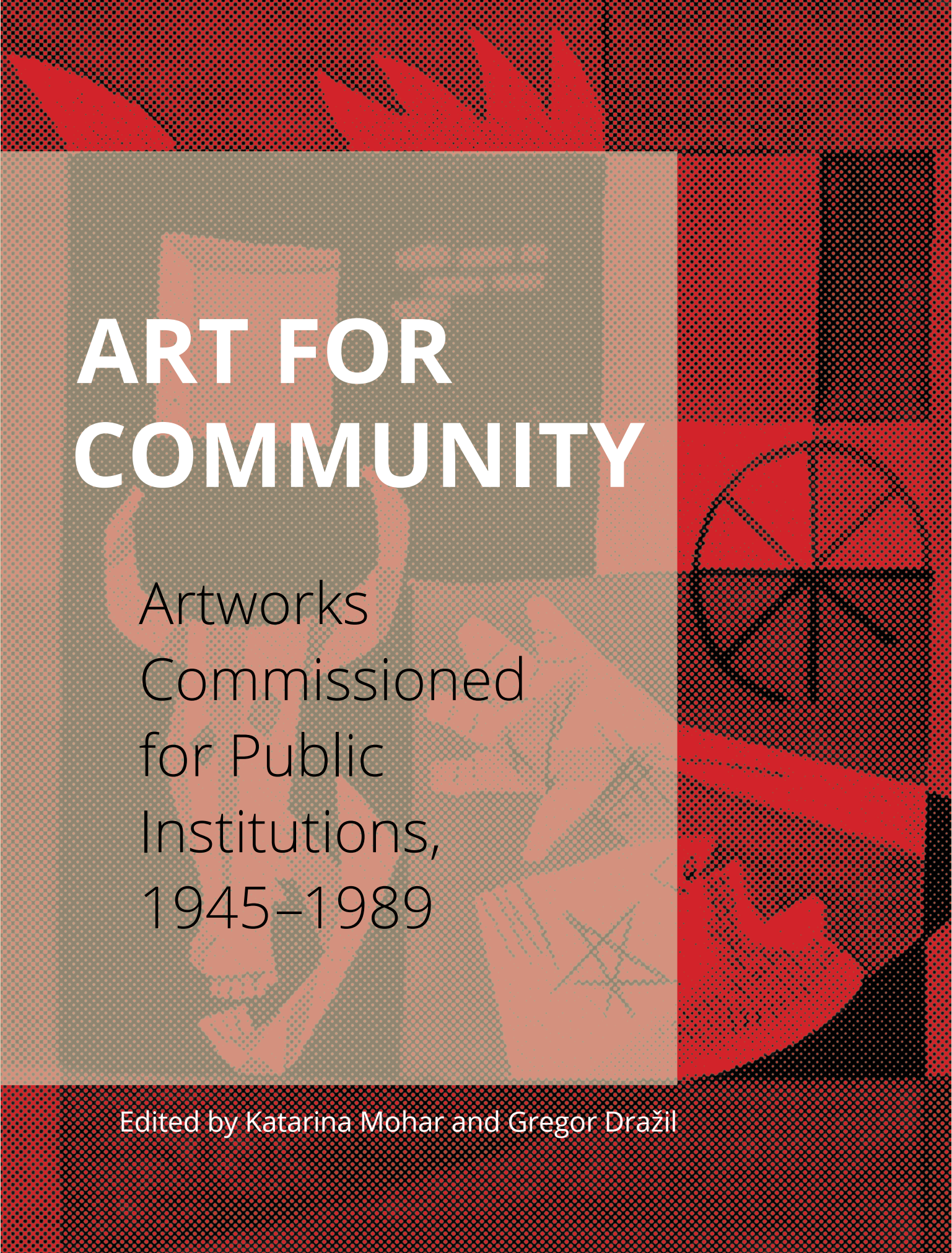




ART FOR COMMUNITY

Artworks
Commissioned
for Public
Institutions,
1945–1989

Edited by Katarina Mohar and Gregor Dražil



Založba ZRC



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Ljubljana, 2026

Opera Instituti Artis Historiae

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Cover image: Ivo Šubic, unrealised sketch for the mosaic in the building of the People's Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia.
Photo: Andreja Rakovec, ZRC SAZU.

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A CULTURA BURGUESA MORRERÁ!



PROMETHEUS'S TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF HERITAGE CHALLENGES POSED BY MURALS FROM THE TIME OF PORTUGAL'S *ESTADO NOVO* DICTATORSHIP (1933–1974)

Mid-20th century murals in Portugal: a dissonant heritage

Between the 1930s and the 1950s, the mass communication potential of mural painting prompted a rush of commissions by public institutions and private organisations across Europe.¹ In Portugal, at the time under the *Estado Novo* (New State) dictatorship (1933–1974), well-established and lesser-known artists were hired to decorate administrative buildings, hospitals, and universities. In the private sector, too, corporations enhanced their headquarters with murals celebrating industry and trade, while commercial establishments, less constrained by political and institutional considerations, gave artists freer creative rein to animate spaces of social life such as cinemas, cafés, and shops. For artists, this opened up attractive professional opportunities in a country with an otherwise very limited art market. By the 1960s, however, this form of art – large-scale decorative panels commissioned for indoor spaces – was losing its appeal in Portugal, as in Europe generally,² and what had once been a common element of the built fabric of society gradually faded from visual culture. Over the following decades, changes in ownership or use of the buildings that once housed murals resulted in the destruction of many of these works while rendering others no longer visible to the public. Still, a substantial number of murals have survived to this day, often as objects of contested significance to today's society. Their association with a dictatorial past, even when they were not necessarily vehicles of state propaganda, tends to generate discomfort, leading to either a certain resistance to engage with these objects, or a knee-jerk dismissal of them. However, the nature of these objects makes them an intrinsic part of buildings we still use; the murals are instances of dissonant heritage³ that are hard to ignore within the urban landscape that we inhabit. Fixed objects in a rapidly changing world, they are increasingly contested by societal interpretations grounded on evolving political, ethical, and cultural factors. Their non-neutral presence, and their state of conservation several decades on, press all stakeholders to engage in discussions regarding possible forms of intervention on them.⁴ The case study presented here addresses one such mural and the heritage challenges it raises today.

The Myth of Prometheus [Figure 1], a mural created by Dordio Gomes (1890–1976) in 1954 for ESBAP, the Porto Higher School of Fine Arts (today FBAUP, Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto), provides a fitting case study for the issues at stake. It is one of a body of six frescoes located in various institutions and establishments in the city, all by Dordio Gomes, that are currently the object of study of the exploratory project *Mural in Motion*.⁵ The project studies this body of works from an art history, public history, and heritage perspective while exploring the possibilities and limitations of digital strategies to tell their story and engage the community in necessary discussions regarding their conservation. To this end, the project has digitised the six murals, using photogrammetry, for the purposes of registration, preservation, study, and dissemination, and will make these high-resolution digital images available online but also use them to “exhibit” the murals, by projecting them at real-life scale in an exhibition venue.⁶ Through this exhibition the project aims to bring the murals out of the relative obscurity they currently find themselves in, in places with limited public access, and encourage public viewing and discussion.

Dordio Gomes, a professor at ESBAP and a renowned figure in Portugal's mid-twentieth-century art scene, was commissioned by the school to produce this mural as an example of the integration of the arts and a masterclass in fresco painting. The mural stands today with all the marks of its passage through time: deep scratches, particularly in its lower section, and the inscription in blue, “*A cultura burguesa morrerá*” (“Bourgeois culture will die”), across the top right section, as well as other details added in the same paint in the bottom right section. What little is known on the exact circumstances surrounding this inscription and the details in blue, all presumably from the same time, points to it having been added in 1974, at the time of the Carnation Revolution that, after a forty-year right-wing dictatorship, would give way to a democratic regime. In the wake of this revolution, the mid-1970s were a time of great political and social upheaval, a time of strong, vocal rejection of the old regime, and of anyone and anything that was perceived as having associated with it. This fresco was not a state commission, and it presented none of the historical and nationalist tropes favoured in that type of work. Its author had been painting murals for various patrons since the 1940s – for a café, a bookshop, and two churches – and would subsequently produce two further mural sets for state institutions.⁷ Presumably by association, this fresco must have been seen as part of the Estado Novo regime that it was now imperative to overcome. At some point in 1974, therefore, members of the school community voiced that sentiment by adding, in blue paint,

Figure 1. Dordio Gomes, *The Myth of Prometheus*, fresco, 1954, 3.61 × 2.89 m, Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto, Porto. Image: Leticia Crespillo, *Mural in Motion*.



the inscription, plus what appears to be a dove, a penis on one of the figures, and colouring in the hats of this and another figure.

After that episode, and until recently, the mural was largely ignored. Over the last twenty years, however, the school has made major efforts to safeguard its own heritage, encompassing its modernist buildings and the various works of art that were created for them. This includes the mural, whose condition calls for some form of restoration. This has raised a major point of debate among the school community on whether a potential clean-up of this fresco should include the removal of the 1974 inscription or leave it in.

There are those who view the inscription as a political intervention, one that tells the story of the 1974 democratic revolution, something that has become an intrinsic part of the mural's history and as such should

be preserved. On the other hand, there are those who argue that any restoration of the mural should bring it as close as possible to its original appearance, including the removal of the 1974 inscription and other details, so as to honour the legacy of a well-loved professor at the school,⁸ who pioneered the teaching of fresco in Portugal at the time, and trained many of the artists who would receive public and private commissions in Portugal over the following decades,⁹ well into the democratic period. The debate has been ongoing since at least 2021¹⁰ and it is hoped that the exploratory project can now contribute to it by generating and communicating knowledge on the mural that might help stakeholders – the school’s student body, its teaching and administrative staff, and public heritage agencies, among others – make informed decisions on any restoration intervention. With research still ongoing at the time of writing, what follows are preliminary findings on the circumstances surrounding the mural’s creation and its reception over time, as well as a formal and iconographic analysis, that should eventually help ascertain the extent of the mural’s artistic, historical, or other societal significance and contribute to decision-making processes on its conservation.

The Myth of Prometheus – analysing a mural equation

A blank wall presents an artist with a complex challenge, one that calls for a creative response capable of reconciling the artist’s own voice and aesthetic enquiries with a variety of external expectations, limitations, and demands: the commission, which to a lesser or greater extent determines the overall theme and terms of production; the specific location of the work, its dialogue with the surrounding architectural elements, the function of the space, and the circulation within it; and the work’s mode of reception, the visibility and legibility of the mural’s forms taking into account the wall’s dimensions, lighting, and angles of vision, as well as the socio-political context that may inform its interpretation by the target audience. Thus, if a canvas can already constitute a complex pictorial problem for an artist, a mural, with this multiplicity of site-specific factors at play, becomes something closer to an equation.¹¹

Indeed, Dordio Gomes’s writings, as those of renowned twentieth century artists who worked on mural commissions, express an understanding of the mural as a practice that cannot be addressed by merely transposing to the wall, at a larger scale, the pictorial solutions of an easel work.¹² From an art historical perspective, therefore, the formal and iconographic analysis of a mural must go beyond the boundaries of the

Figure 2. General view of the vestibule to the Architecture Pavilion, with Dordio Gomes's *The Myth of Prometheus* on the wall to the left, pictured at the time of its inauguration in 1954. Source: Fundação Manuel Leão, Fundo Fotográfico Teófilo Rego, inv. no.: PT-FML-TR-COM-70-134 (as reproduced in Nunes, *Vistas de exposição*).



painted surface; it must examine the choices made by the artist as strategies to resolve the complex fit between their own creative wishes and the requirements of the commission, the presumed expectations of the target audience, and the formal, functional, and symbolic specificities of the mural's spatial setting. It must consider, in other words, how the artist went about trying to resolve that particular mural equation.

From the early 1950s ESBAP had been reformulating its curricular plan with the specific purpose of promoting an integrated approach to artistic production that could bring together architects, painters, and sculptors in collaborative work.¹³ From a career development perspective, and in the context of a restricted art market where work on commission could be a much-needed source of income for artists, this training was meant to enable students to undertake work for public and private entities. Against this background, *The Myth of Prometheus* was commissioned as a mural for the school's newly built Architecture Pavilion [Figure 2], which also incorporated sculptural works, as an example of what Carlos Ramos (1897–1969), the school's director at the time, would term the “pact of the three major arts”.¹⁴

No documentary evidence has so far surfaced to provide details on the actual commission process or the people involved in deciding the exact location for this mural, its theme, and the way it was to be represented.

The Promethean myth, at any rate, would have been a suitable choice for a university. In an in-depth study of the ancient story of the titan and its depictions over the centuries, Carol Dougherty stresses the richness and complexity of this myth, and the wealth of interpretive possibilities it has offered artists and writers.¹⁵ This variety notwithstanding, a central element of the myth is the idea of fire stolen by Prometheus from the gods as a gift to mankind, symbolising “the spirit of technology, forbidden knowledge, the conscious intellect, political power, and artistic inspiration.”¹⁶ Given this association with knowledge and the arts, therefore, it is not surprising to find renditions of the myth, in different pictorial languages, in a number of university settings: from the neoclassicist cycle devoted to this story in the vestibule of the University of Copenhagen by Constantin Hansen, dated c. 1845,¹⁷ to the bold dramatism of José Clemente Orozco’s 1930 fresco for Pomona College, California,¹⁸ or the geometrised 1957 interpretation by Rufino Tamayo for the University of Puerto Rico.¹⁹

Dordio Gomes had a profound knowledge of classical culture²⁰ and was likely well acquainted with this myth and its pertinence to a place of learning and the arts such as ESBAP. His take on the narrative focuses less on the often-depicted episodes of the theft of the fire by Prometheus, and his subsequent punishment by Zeus for his defiance, to bring instead to the fore the aspects of the story more directly related with creativity and the arts. Thus, with the theft and the punishment respectively conveyed in small vignettes at the top left and top right corners of the mural [Figure 3], the bulk of the composition is devoted instead to the portrayal of Prometheus as the creator of mankind, and to the various arts developed by the latter after receiving, through fire, the gift of knowledge and technological advancement. At the centre of the composition, a larger-than-life Prometheus moulds the first humans from clay [Figure 1]. At his feet, a group of roughly sketched figures seems to represent early humankind in a still primeval state [Figure 4], before the enlightenment that would come as a gift from the titan in the form of fire. With that knowledge in their possession, humans develop various forms of art and technology: just below and to the right of the group of early humans, two figures play and listen to music while another paints a vase while, to the left of Prometheus, three figures draw geometric shapes on the floor as another two are busy building a structure [Figure 5]. In addition to music, therefore, the depiction encompasses the three arts of the school’s “pact” – architecture, painting, and sculpture, the latter represented by Prometheus himself in moulding humanity from clay.

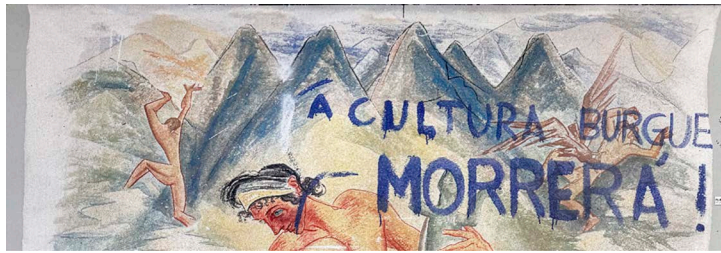


Figure 3. Detail of The Myth of Prometheus, the theft of fire (left) and the punishment (right) under the 1970s inscription. Image: Leticia Crespillo, Mural in Motion.



Figure 4. Detail of The Myth of Prometheus, early humankind in a primeval state, plus figures playing music and painting a vase. Image: Leticia Crespillo, Mural in Motion.

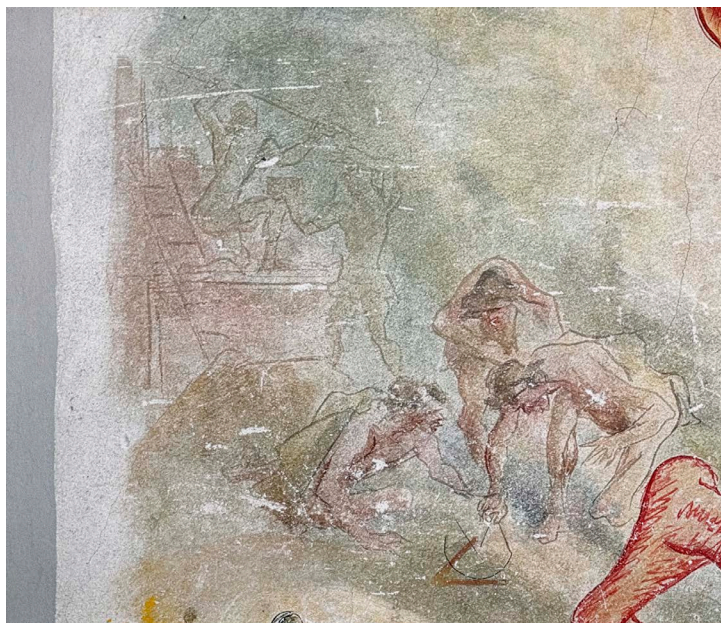


Figure 5. Detail of The Myth of Prometheus, figures designing and building structures. Image: Leticia Crespillo, Mural in Motion.

Figure 6. Detail of
The Myth of Prometheus,
possibly Deucalion and
Pyrrha. Image: Leticia
Crespillo, Mural in
Motion.



Two larger figures – one male, one female – in the left bottom corner [Figure 6] leave more room for interpretation. In team discussions within the *Mural in Motion* project, their dynamic stance has led some to posit they could represent the art of dance. The mural's poor state of conservation hampers these figures' legibility, but their relative position to Prometheus, with whom they seem to establish a direct line of gaze, sets them apart from all other figures and suggests they could be actual characters from the story. Given that these figures seem to be running away from the scene, rather than joining in on the creative endeavours of early humanity, perhaps they are meant to represent Deucalion and Pyrrha²¹ being warned by Prometheus about the flood that Zeus, angry at all this defiance, is planning to send to rid the earth of troublesome humankind. By including this episode in his interpretation of the myth, Dordio Gomes would thus be incorporating the theme of suffering that came with enlightenment.

Finally, by Prometheus's left foot, a muscular male figure holds a shooting bow [Figure 7]. It is Heracles who, in a lull between his twelve labours, kills the eagle to liberate Prometheus from his punishment. The inclusion of this episode is perhaps significant when considered in the context of the dictatorial regime ESBAP had to operate under. While the school had to comply with national directives for higher education in the fine arts, it was known as a more open establishment that offered greater pedagogical and ideological freedom than its Lisbon counterpart,²² from which

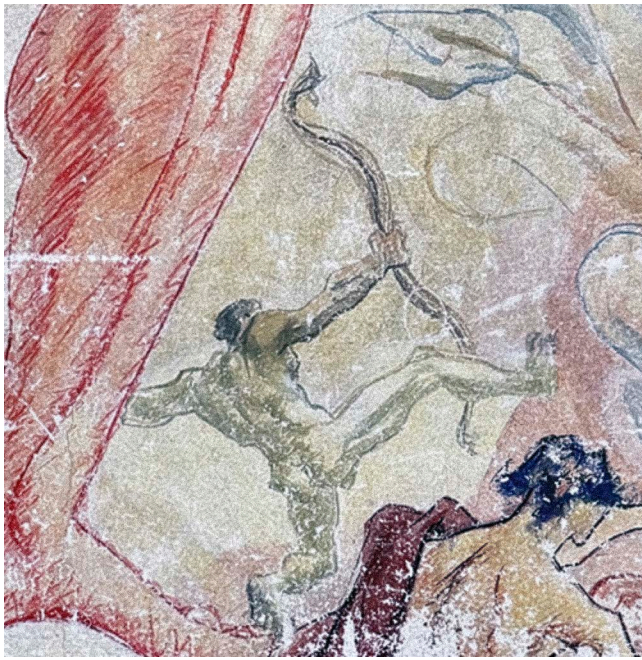


Figure 7. Detail of The Myth of Prometheus, Heracles shooting the eagle. Image: Leticia Crespillo, Mural in Motion.

students often requested to be transferred to Porto.²³ Within the limitations imposed by the close scrutiny of a dictatorial regime, the school's director, Carlos Ramos, and its head professors of painting and sculpture, Dordio Gomes and Salvador Barata Feyo (1899–1990) respectively, managed to cultivate an open and stimulating creative environment that was and remains fondly remembered by former students.²⁴ Among them, Júlio Resende, who would go on to become a professor at the school, described Dordio Gomes as a “revolutionary within the Academy”, for his openness to international artistic currents and the creative freedom he granted his students.²⁵ Against this back-

ground, Prometheus's liberation from the suffering imposed by a tyrannical Zeus, discreetly conveyed in the form of a small arrow-shooting Heracles, might perhaps be interpreted as a subtle but deliberate allusion to freedom from authoritarianism.

The many variations and subplots that exist on the myth of Prometheus involve a great deal more characters and episodes than could realistically be depicted in one mural panel. Key characters in the myth that Dordio Gomes chose to leave out are Zeus, the all-powerful tyrant who punishes Prometheus for his gift to humankind, Athena, who breathes life to the first humans moulded from clay by the hero, and Pandora, sent by Zeus with her jar of ills to harm humanity in revenge for his defiance. However central to the story, these characters were excluded from Dordio Gomes's interpretation. In contrast, he included Heracles, a character that only makes a brief appearance in certain versions of the myth, yet whose liberation of the hero reinforces the theme of freedom. The Heracles episode of the myth gained particular traction in the Romantic period,²⁶ not least through Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1792–1822) highly influential interpretation of the story in *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). Dougherty sees in Shelley's take on the myth a symbolism that “operates at a level beyond politics as well, invoking the image of Prometheus's liberation from [Zeus's] chains to represent the forces in man's soul that combine to release his creative power and restore his imaginative freedom.”²⁷ While the extent of Dordio Gomes's acquaintance with post-classical interpretations of the

Figure 8. General view of the Architecture Pavilion entrance hall with The Myth of Prometheus mural. Photo: Begoña Farré Torras.



myth, including Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, remains undetermined at the time of writing, his inclusion of Heracles in the mural might perhaps be read, beyond any ideological implications, as a deliberate symbolic reference to creative freedom, echoing his own and the school's stance towards its students.

For their part, the aesthetic solutions proposed by Dordio Gomes in this fresco also reinforce its integration with its setting from a formal and functional standpoint. The photograph in Figure 2 gives a broad view of the entrance hall, shortly after its opening, with the mural towards the left of the space, close to double doors leading towards facilities on the ground floor of the building. The fresco's decentralised location in this hall, bathed in sunlight from ample glass panels, and its composition around a larger-than-life figure, ensure the visibility of the protagonist who welcomes viewers into the space without taking it over. In turn, the floor-to-ceiling placement of the mural makes the action depicted in it readily accessible to passers-by, with particular visibility being given, just below eye level, to all the characters and episodes related to human creativity, the implications of enlightenment, and the discreet yet significant presence of the hero's liberator. Chromatically, the mural presents the characteristic palette of fresco painting, dominated by earthen greens, ochres, and browns that create a subtle warm contrast with the light grey of the walls immediately surrounding it, while the modelling of the central figure, achieved through unexpected reddish highlights, picks up the strong burgundy hue of the wall further to the right [Figure 8].

The pictorial strategies adopted by Dordio Gomes in this fresco signal a degree of formal experimentation that sets this work somewhat apart from his mural production. In the absence of documentation that might shed light on the brief he received for the fresco, it seems reasonable to posit that, as a senior figure at a school of fine arts that nurtured artistic autonomy, he found himself in a position of having considerable creative leeway. His innovative approach to this particular mural project is most visible in two aspects: the rapid, illustration-like style of figuration, without precedents in his own mural production or that of other artists at the time; and the uneven boundaries between the frescoed area and the remaining wall, which he had only used once before in a commission immediately preceding this one.²⁸ These features lend the Promethean mural an unconventional look that speaks to the school's spirit of creative exploration and generate a striking, almost organic counterpoint to the rationalist lines of the building's modernist architecture.

The mural's placement within the entrance hall made it unmissable for anyone accessing the building's ground floor facilities through the double doors next to it. Realistically, however, this location would have elicited little contemplation by students and staff walking by on their way to and from lessons. The hall, however, included a long stone bench, located directly across from the mural [Figure 9] from which they would have been able to enjoy an unrushed view of the entire space and perhaps ponder on the aesthetic effect of the mural in dialogue with its architectural surroundings.

Evolving communities, evolving needs, evolving reception

As an example of the integration of the arts and a practical lesson in fresco painting, the mural was warmly celebrated and appreciated by the school's community at the time of its inauguration in 1954.²⁹

However, from a functional point of view, its integration with architecture began to present difficulties from the moment the hall's use changed. What was originally conceived as an entrance vestibule, and therefore a place mostly of passage and waiting, began to be used also as a display area for the end-of-year student exhibitions. Whenever any such exhibition was in place, the colouring and dynamic figuration of the mural must have created visual interferences with the student works on show. Photographs from the 1960s show the mural covered every time the entrance hall doubled as an exhibition space [Figure 9]. While these were always temporary measures and the mural went back on view as soon as each



Figure 9. View of the Architecture Pavilion entrance hall being used for the 1963 end-of-year student exhibition, with the mural covered. Source: Fundação Manuel Leão, Fundo Teófilo Rego, inv. no.: PT-FML-TR-COM-70-111 (as reproduced in Nunes, Vistas de exposição).

exhibition finished, they appear to signal a gradual change in the mural's significance over time, perhaps accentuated following the end of Dordio Gomes's tenure at ESBAP in 1960.

A decade later, as already described, the 1974 Carnation Revolution and the social agitation that ensued generated a feeling of rejection towards the mural that was expressed in the inscription and other details added in blue paint. The precise circumstances surrounding this episode are still largely unknown. Further research is needed to establish, among other aspects, the extent to which this intervention expressed a generalised feeling at the time within the broader school community or was representative of certain members within it. Following this episode, and until recently, the mural appears to have been more or less ignored. At some point in its history, also yet to be determined, new functional requirements again dictated the mural's fortune when the wall space was turned over to lockers or some other form of furniture that left deep horizontal scratches on the pigmented layer of lime mortar. The story of how this mural came to be, of the classical myth it represents, and of the work's reception over time are all relevant to the debate the school community is conducting

on its future. The project will seek to develop these narrative lines, among others, through digital means of display, as part of the exhibition.

Photogrammetry and its applications

An in-depth study of an artwork requires access to good quality images that, in the case of murals, are notoriously difficult to obtain. A mural's placement and dimensions, often monumental, generally thwart attempts at photographing it from a central point to obtain a fully frontal view of its entirety. These limitations can be circumvented through digitisation, whether by means of laser scanning or photogrammetry. The *Mural in Motion* project has opted for the latter to digitise the corpus of murals under study, including *The Myth of Prometheus*. Photogrammetry involves taking a very large number of partial photographs of an object, with a conventional reflex camera or even just a mobile phone, which are then computationally processed into a composite 3D model of the original. In the case of murals, the three-dimensional capture of the object is of particular interest, for instance, for those panels that are painted on curved surfaces. Even for those on flat walls, photogrammetry makes it possible to capture fine details of the surface texture, including wall irregularities and, of particular interest in the case of fresco murals, the "seams" between *giornate*. The 3D models thus obtained are then also rendered as high-resolution 2D images that can be used for communication purposes in various degrees of resolution. In this chapter, for example, the image of *The Myth of Prometheus* presented in Figure 1 is not a photograph of the mural but actually the medium-resolution version of the high-resolution 2D render of the 3D model, obtained from hundreds of photographs through the process of photogrammetry.

The project contemplates various communication applications for the 3D models and 2D renders, both online and in an in-person setting. These include, as already mentioned, the use of the high-resolution 2D images to project the murals at real scale in a public exhibition. As this is planned to take place at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto, former ESBAP, this form of projection will not be used for the specific case of *The Myth of Prometheus*, as visitors – from the school and broader community – will be able to view the actual mural in the building next to the exhibition hall. The 2D images of the fresco will, in any case, be used as part of the project's critical examination of animation as a curatorial strategy. Animation is increasingly being used as a mediation device to bring art to broad audiences in both commercial and museum settings. Often, especially in

commercial venues, this takes the form of self-styled “immersive” exhibitions that magnify, replicate, and animate the works of art in all-enveloping projections. In its search for visual novelty, this form of mediation can profoundly alter the perception of the work of art it purports to present, while showing it at a speed that undermines its contemplation. From a critical stance towards these modes of spectacularisation of the work of art, the project aims instead at exploring the potential of animation for meaningful, engaging, and thought-provoking knowledge communication.³⁰ With regard to *The Myth of Prometheus*, the project contemplates the possibility of using short animation films, to be shown on monitors at the exhibition, with two purposes: on the one hand, bringing to life the story of the titan as portrayed in Dordio Gomes’s rendition; on the other, tracing the mural’s fortunes from its creation in 1954 to today or, conversely, virtually reconstructing its hypothesised original appearance.

The first application intends to use animated storytelling to help exhibition visitors make sense of the classical myth with which contemporary audiences are perhaps less familiar than was the case at the time the mural was first shown to the school community. The second application has evident implications for the debate on conservation measures to be taken with regard to the mural. Given that the fresco has been digitised in its current condition, should the school community decide to restore it as closely as possible to its original appearance, there now exists a high-resolution record of it that would digitally preserve the 1974 intervention. Conversely, should the school community resolve to leave the 1974 inscription in place, it will still be possible to create a digital reconstruction showing a hypothetical rendition of the mural in its original state.

Over the decades since Dordio Gomes conceived and painted *The Myth of Prometheus* at ESBAP, the school’s evolving circumstances have given rise to profound shifts in its community’s perception of, and engagement with, the mural. What was an object of appreciation with pedagogical significance in the 1950s had become somewhat of a visual interference by the 1960s, when the space housing it took on different functions. For its part, the revolutionary context of the 1970s turned this artwork into an embodiment of a dictatorial past to be contested. The mural survived from the 1980s onwards, largely neglected, damaged by the furniture placed against it in yet another change of function for that space. Today, given its poor state of conservation, its restoration is discussed as part of broader efforts to preserve the school’s heritage for current and future generations of art students. This places the school community at the centre of the debate on the mural’s significance as heritage, be it artistic,

historic, or even just affective. In conjunction with the preservation, study, and communication possibilities opened up by digitisation, it is hoped that the preliminary findings presented here, and further research to be carried out in the upcoming months, will make a meaningful contribution to a discussion involving the expression of artistic and ideological disagreement, the significance of objects with associations to a dictatorial past, the safeguarding of the school's facilities and material heritage, and the preservation of its institutional memory.

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Endnotes

- 1 Romy Golan, *Muralnomad: The Paradox of Wall Painting, Europe 1927–1957* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1–5.
- 2 Golan, *Muralnomad*, 1–5.
- 3 Understood here as heritage of contested, conflictive, or generally non-consensual significance, as theorised by J. E. Tunbridge and G. J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (Chichester and New York: J. Wiley, 1996).
- 4 Ana Galán-Pérez, Stefano Magnolo and Eduarda Vieira, “The Berlin Wall. A Theoretical Approach to the Conservation of a Dissonant Heritage in Continuous Resignification, and Its Socio-Legal Implications” (paper presented at the *EPoCH 2025: Emerging Perspectives on Conservation and Heritage – Communication and Participation conference*, Universidade Católica, Porto, 27 March 2025).
- 5 *Mural in Motion*, short title for *Lime, Pigments, and Pixels - Bringing Modern Mural Heritage Back to Public Life: A Critical Approach to Digital Curatorship for Art History* (2023.11110.PEX, <https://doi.org/10.54499/2023.11110.PEX>) running from January 2025 to June 2026. This chapter was submitted at an early stage of the project. The project website is available at <http://www.muralinmotion.fcsh.unl.pt>.
- 6 The exhibition resulting from the project is scheduled to take place in spring 2026 at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto.
- 7 Following this work, Dordio Gomes would take on commissions to paint four panels at Porto City Hall (1956–1957) and another two at the city’s Palace of Justice (1957–1961), all of them with marked nationalist themes.
- 8 As attested, among others, by the documentary that a group of his former students produced on his career and its impact on the school community, in *Carta a Mestre Dordio Gomes*, documentary directed by Manuel Guimarães, 1971, 35 mm, 24 fps, colour, sound, 00:17:59, Cinemateca Portuguesa, accessed March 19, 2026, <http://www.cinemateca.pt/Cinemateca-Digital/Ficha.aspx?obraid=4353&type=Video>.
- 9 Laura Castro, “Abertura,” in *A pintura a fresco: Os materiais, a técnica, a sua aplicação*, by Simão César Dordio Gomes (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, 2000).
- 10 The debate was briefly mentioned in the most recent monograph on the artist: Laura Castro, ed., *Dordio Gomes (1890–1976)* (Arraiolos: Câmara Municipal de Arraiolos, 2021), 177.
- 11 The notion of the “mural equation” comes from conversations with Josep Minguell Cardenyès, muralist, researcher at *Mural in Motion*, and member of the Reial Acadèmia Catalana de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi, who uses it to describe his own experience as a painter of frescoes.
- 12 Such as Fernand Léger (1881–1955), Joan Miró (1893–1983), David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974), or Joaquín Torres-García (1874–1949). Fernand Léger, “Mural Painting and Easel Painting,” in *Functions of Painting*, ed. Edward F. Fry (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 160–164; Letters from Joan Miró to Josep Lluís Sert (14 October 1947; 19 November 1947; 15 May 1948) in Patricia Juncosa Vecchierini, ed., *Miró Sert: Segons ells mateixos - En sus propias palabras - In their own words: correspondència 1937–1980* (Murcia: CENDEAC; Palma de Mallorca: Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró, 2008); David Alfaro Siqueiros, “Los vehículos de la pintura dialéctico-subversiva,” 1932, Biblioteca Nacional de Montevideo, Luis Eduardo Pombo Archive, accessed March 16, 2026, <https://icaa.mfah.org/s/es/item/1238676>; Joaquín Torres-García, “Esbós autobiogràfic del pintor Torres-García,” *D’ací i d’allà*, no. 98 (February 1926), 438–439.
- 13 Luís Pinto Nunes, *Vistas de exposição: Exposições magnas da ESBAP (1952–1968)* (master’s thesis, Porto: Universidade do Porto, 2022), 77–78.
- 14 Nunes, *Vistas de exposição*, 77. The Architecture Pavilion was designed by Manuel Lima Fernandes de Sá (1903–1980) and built between 1951 and 1954. In addition to Dordio Gomes’s fresco, it featured sculptural works by Professor Salvador Barata Foyo. Nunes, *Vistas de exposição*, 52.

- 15 According to this author, even more so than other Greek myths, the Promethean one is “infinitely flexible”. Carol Dougherty, *Prometheus* (London: Routledge, 2006), 8.
- 16 Dougherty, *Prometheus*, 3.
- 17 Images available at “File:Prometheus and Apollo (Hansen).jpg,” Wikimedia Commons, accessed March 19, 2026, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prometheus_and_Apollo_\(Hansen\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prometheus_and_Apollo_(Hansen).jpg).
- 18 Images available at “José Clemente Orozco’s Prometheus,” Benton Museum of Art Pomona College, accessed March 19, 2026, <https://www.pomona.edu/museum/collections/jos%C3%A9-clemente-orozcos-prometheus>.
- 19 Images available at “Prometeo, magistral obra del maestro mexicano Rufino Tamayo en Puerto Rico,” Puerto Rico Art News, accessed March 19, 2026, <https://www.puertoricoartnews.com/2019/07/prometeo-magistral-obra-del-maestro.html>.
- 20 Laura Castro, “Sentido do fresco na obra de Dordio Gomes (um manifesto clássico),” in *Dordio Gomes: frescos*, ed. Câmara Municipal de Matosinhos (Matosinhos: Museu da Quinta de Santiago, 1997), n. p.
- 21 The interpretive hypothesis is indebted to André Ferreira, researcher and communicator on Greek and Roman mythology.
- 22 Lúcia Almeida Matos, *Escultura em Portugal no século XX (1910–1969): Academias, modernismo e vanguardas* (PhD diss., Porto: Universidade do Porto, 2003), 276–282.
- 23 Nunes, *Vistas de exposição*, 47.
- 24 Júlio Resende, “Um tempo para viver, e o infinito para permanecer,” in *Homenagem da Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto / 2a secção ao Mestre Dordio Gomes*, ed. ESBAP (Porto: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1978), n. p.; Jorge Pinheiro, interview by Laura Castro and Paulo Dordio Gomes, Arquivo de Memória, November 2021, accessed March 19, 2026, https://arquivodememoria.pt/pessoas_entrevista.aspx?lang=PO&taM=0&ide=3852&ida=5469.
- 25 Júlio Resende, “Dordio Gomes, o mestre,” in *Dordio Gomes: frescos*, ed. Câmara Municipal de Matosinhos (Matosinhos: Museu da Quinta de Santiago, 1997), n. p.
- 26 Dougherty, *Prometheus*, 22.
- 27 Dougherty, *Prometheus*, 100.
- 28 Previous to this commission, Dordio Gomes had produced frescoes for a café (1944), a bookstore (1949), and two churches (1947 and 1953). The latter, at the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, shows Dordio Gomes’s first attempt at this type of irregular edging.
- 29 Nunes, *Vistas de exposição*, 77–78.
- 30 For an in-depth discussion of the project’s critical adoption of digital technologies for curatorial purposes, see Begoña Farré Torras, Leticia Crespillo Marí and Marta Soares, “Post Wow, Is Less More? A Critical Approach to Animated Mapped Projection for Art Historical Knowledge Sharing: The Twentieth-Century Mural as a Case Study,” *Magazén: International Journal for Digital and Public Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2024): 149–172, <https://doi.org/10.30687/mag/2724-3923/2024/01/006>.

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Prometejeve preizkušnje in tegobe: študija primera izzivov dediščinskega varstva, ki jih odpirajo stenske poslikave iz obdobja portugalske diktature *Estado Novo* (1933–1974)

Povzetek

V poglavju so obravnavani dediščinski izzivi, ki jih odpirajo stenske poslikave, naročene na Portugalskem v času diktature *Estado Novo* (1933–1974). Izhodišče je freska slikarja Dordia Gomesa (1890–1976) z naslovom *Mit o Prometeju*, ki je leta 1954 nastala za Višjo šolo za likovno umetnost v Portu (ESBAP, danes FBAUP). Tudi kadar takšna dela nimajo neposredne propagandne vsebine, lahko zaradi povezanosti z avtoritarno preteklostjo postanejo problematična dediščina. Več kot pet desetletij po t. i. revoluciji nageljnov, ki je aprila 1974 na Portugalskem vzpostavila demokracijo, se v akademskem in širšem družbenem prostoru krepi zavest o nujnosti soočenja s to zapuščino. Ker so ta dela še vedno prisotna v javnih prostorih in pogosto v slabem stanju, se postavlja vprašanje, kako z njimi ravnati: jih restavrirati, premestiti, kontekstualizirati ali nanje odgovoriti z novimi ustvarjalnimi posegi, ki bi jih lahko smiselno vključili v današnji družbeni prostor?

Mit o Prometeju je v poglavju obravnavan kot primer »disonantne dediščine«: kot kulturni objekt, katerega pomen se zaradi sprememb političnih, etičnih in družbenih vrednot skozi čas spreminja in sproža polemike. Freska je bila sprva razumljena kot izjemen dosežek freskantstva in kot uresničitev pedagoškega ideala ESBAP, ki je zagovarjal sintezo arhitekture, slikarstva in kiparstva. Kasneje se je njena recepcija izrazito spreminjala. Približno desetletje po nastanku, v času, ko se je njen avtor že upokojil, so nove študijske usmeritve šole in spremenjena raba stavbe zmanjšale simbolni pomen in prepoznavnost poslikave. Desetletje kasneje, po revoluciji leta 1974, je bila freska dodatno zaznamovana s političnim napisom »Buržoazna kultura bo umrla« in z drugimi intervencijami, ki so izražale zavračanje dela zaradi njegove domnevne povezave z diktatorsko preteklostjo.

V naslednjih letih je bila freska zanemarjena in podvržena precejšnjim poškodbam. Nedavna prizadevanja šole za ohranitev modernistične arhitekturne in umetnostne dediščine so razpravo o njeni konservatorsko-restavratorski obravnavi znova postavila v ospredje. Ključno vprašanje je, ali naj se v procesu restavriranja dela odstrani napis iz leta 1974 in delo približa prvotni zamisli avtorja ali pa naj se napis ohrani kot zgodovinska plast, ki priča o političnem protestu in institucionalnem spominu.

Poleg zgodovine nastanka in recepcije freske prinaša poglavje tudi formalno in ikonografsko analizo Gomeseve interpretacije mita o Prometeju. Pokaže, da osredotočenje na ustvarjalne vidike mita in vključitev Herakleja, ki Prometeja osvobodi Zevsove kazni, ne pomenita le slavljenja umetnosti, temveč ju lahko razumemo tudi kot subtilen namig na ustvarjalno svobodo. V tem smislu lahko fresko razumemo v kontekstu razmeroma odprtega intelektualnega ozračja šole v času diktature.

V poglavju je freska obravnavana tudi v kontekstu projekta *Mural in Motion*, širše raziskovalne pobude, ki povezuje umetnostno zgodovino, javno zgodovino, dediščinske študije in digitalne tehnologije ter v okviru katere proučujejo šest stenskih poslikav Dordia Gomesa. Korpus je bil digitaliziran s fotogrametrijo, kar omogoča izdelavo natančnih 3D modelov in visokoločljivih 2D podob, namenjenih dokumentiranju, raziskovanju in posredovanju gradiva, tudi v okviru inovativnih razstavnih strategij. Digitalizacija je zato predstavljena kot orodje, ki lahko spodbudi in informira razpravo med različnimi deležniki. V poglavju izhajamo iz stališča, da je za odločanje o prihodnosti sporne umetnosti (*contested art*), kot je *Mit o Prometeju*, nujno razumeti njeno večplastno zgodovino: od nastanka in ideoloških konfliktov do zanemarjanja in ponovnega interesa. S povezovanjem raziskovalnega dela in digitalnega posredovanja projekt pomembno prispeva k razpravam o konserviranju, spominu in upravljanju dediščine, povezane z avtoritarno preteklostjo.

A substantial body of postwar art created for institutional environments remains hidden in plain sight: in schools, hospitals, municipal offices, factories, hotels, shops, and other spaces of everyday life. Some works remain intact, others survive in altered interiors or as partial material remains, and still others are known only through scattered archival records, photographs, and uncertain

memories. Many have been covered, relocated, destroyed or forgotten, even though they formed an important part of postwar public space and visual culture.

This volume contributes to the transnational study of art

commissioned for public institutions, a field that remains unevenly researched across national contexts. The chapters show how institutions used art to shape their environments and how later changes in use or ownership affected the works' meanings and prospects for preservation.

