

## **The future of the festival formulae**

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I consider, festivals are exceptional moments in the life of artists and audiences in which, in a compressed, pressurized and intensive way, people celebrate together the artistic work (in case of arts festivals) or whatever people want to celebrate together in festivals.

In a general sense, the Latin countries have based the common and social life in festivals (we say fiestas). Mostly coming from a religious background and others more profanes: Patron Saint festivities (Fiestas Mayores), Carnaval, Processions, Parades, etc. Nowadays, many fiestas has been desacred by the impulse of the modern society but have kept the idea of people gathering in an extraordinary, exceptional moment of the year; people living and enjoying together the art of living in community.

In fiestas, arts always have had a paper. Normally traditional artists, amateur and skilled by the experience and the (**paso de padres a hijos**). What we consider high culture wasn't in fiestas, they were only reduced to a small part of the privileged society. When people enjoyed fiestas drinking, dancing, singing, the high class society enjoyed, maybe in a more boring way, the refined poetries, operas, what we now say classical music, etc.

Popular fiestas have been considered the enjoyment of the mass. High culture: the refinement of the sensitive souls. This separation has been supported by the powers, giving protection to the most talented artist and putting them apart of the society by bribery and adulation. Also promoting a criticism code that gave these arts recognition let them to develop and research by money support and high educational system. Otherwise popular arts were kept without possibilities to develop, not recognizing as arts (creation) that means not any support, nor education and keeping tradition without any possibility to adapt to the real situation of the society.

Streets arts were born in the 60ths as a reaction of the artists, in a revolutionary moment of the society, to bring high quality arts to the society. In Spain were born during the 70ths when the transition to the democracy, people (artists) were especially sensitive to communicate directly to the society. In this time we attended a fast development of the fiestas and, in some cases these involved contemporary artists in their programmes. In Europe we saw that street arts festivals were born, but in Spain was not so necessary to create new festivals, fiestas were already festivals and people was there open to participate.

In the Spanish transition for example La Mercè (fiesta of Barcelona) changed completely its character. Comediantes founded in 1981 La Fira de Tàrraga from the traditional fiesta of Tàrraga, Sant Eloi.

Nowadays, my point is developing fiestas in artistic street arts festival. That is hard and difficult to assume by the public institutions. They insist in keeping arts festivals apart of the society and give a high amount of money to keep culture far away the majority of the society.

Of course my alternative for European festivals is not to transform them in fiestas (would be too much funny) and Fiestas take place in open-air sites and in Europe is always raining. But a significant effort has to be made to approach artist to the public. Leaving the sacred theatres and go where people live and where people communicate each other. Create new spaces for communication. Participate in the popular events and get support and involvement of the contemporary artists (Carnival, Parades). We should include the new cultures of the cities, youngsters, immigrants, and new emergent urban artists and let them to develop their work in new spaces of the city. Is not the matter of bringing theatre to the people to educate them and once they are educated attract them to the theatres. Maybe is the contrary: educate arts to go to meet people where they are.

When we speak about “integration” of other cultures we can’t hope that they enjoy our classic culture; it’s probably easier that immigrants participate in outdoors cultural events. In Spain is the easier way to put together people from different cultural backgrounds.

Future festivals could be a mixture of the two models. In the last five to ten years many festivals are working in this way. They programme not only in theatres but also in public spaces (streets, markets, clubs, etc): Site specific is developing fast.

All what I said is not incompatible with high quality, talented, innovative arts but some artistic criteria should be changed to give value to the streets arts. Looking at them with the same eyes that the one's used to look at traditional presented indoor Italian styles are condemn to frustration.