Introduction

The Department of Murals was founded around 2000-2001. A council was formed of the following people: Karim Nassr, Ahmad Nadalian, Asghar Kafshchian Moghaddam, Hosseini Rad. Later the late Iraj Zand and Iraj Eskandari were also invited to this council. The Chair was Mahmood Shoeibi who said that 60 projects were carried out during his chairmanship. In a personal interviewed, Shoeibi stated:

“After the revolution, mural became a motto and an advertising podium for different issues and mural was not executed in a good way. No visual aspect was observed in executing murals. However in the last ten years it has had a better development. We have had a better supervision over the preparation, priming and the quality and type of colors. When I was the Chair, 60 projects were carried out under the supervision of this department. Some people say it’s better to do nothing rather than doing it badly, but if we hadn’t done these, worse works would have been created. All in all, we have been able to introduce mural as an art with many potentials and normalize its issues. After the foundation of the Department of Murals and the formation of the Council, a set of regulations were drawn and then a public summons was issued to identify interested and expert artists.”
Some works are so poorly done, both technically and regarding their content, which they would have been better left un-created. Sometimes the researcher also wonders whether these works should have been executed in the first place. However, how true is it that if these works were not created, worse works would have replaced them as Shoeibi says? This controversial issue remains to be tested by time. As seen below Shoeibi believes that public art does not need to be done expertly. The researcher does not agree with this point however, believing that this might become an excuse for poor works to be set up in the city. In this regard Shoeibi also stated in his interviewed that:

“It is said in public art that expertise should not be focused on, because 50% is the share of expert artists and 50% is the share of people’s growth. In this form, this art might become problematic and it must be controlled or even suppress it a little. After the summons, two problems arose. Firstly, many of the received designs were not suitable for murals and the artists had presented their own personal paintings. Secondly, in the Beautifying Organization there was a code for coloring and not murals. So the budget was for coloring and not murals which is much more complicated. Finally, we got one code for both mural and sculpture. Now we see that in spite of all the problems visual culture has infiltrated urban management and expressions such as visual pollution, urban graphics, and the rest are talked of. This is something to be happy about.”

The researcher thinks that all in all a positive step has been taken in spite of all apparent shortcomings and mural is now a familiar concept for Iranians. The general target has been a positive one. Mural is an experimental work and some problems cannot be foretold. But as time goes by and with passion, perseverance and of course by researching various aspects, one can hope to achieve better results in this art. Shoeibi emphasizes the importance of research in urban graphic. Shoeibi believes and the researcher also agrees that it is not enough to dismiss a work of art as poor. Instead one must look into the factors that have led to this weak execution. As Shoeibi mentioned in his interviewed:

“Urban graphic is in fact a kind of visual management that can use various expertise like urban furniture, mural and sculpture to
create a harmonious, enjoyable space regarding form, color and other visual elements. We suggested the creation of urban graphic management and defined 17 research systems for it and made a research summons. The general purpose was to have an extensive research on color in urban perspective. We wanted to find out which urban surfaces were capable of carrying color and what colors suited them. We wanted to categorize the building facets and have plans for built facets and directions for un-built ones. We studied the contemporary conditions and the desired conditions and decided on how we could get from the former to the latter. We didn’t get the desired results as the administrators and policies kept changing.”

Mural is too complicated to be performed by a single person. Aesthetics and technical issues are taken care of by the artist, but the execution of a mural needs other elements that are beyond the artist’s abilities. There is a need for team work and other areas should be researched which are outside the artist’s expertise; examples include urban graphics and harmonizing urban spaces which as Shoeibi says need a research team. All these will not happen if the administrator with correct ideas is not supported by his/her superiors. In that case ideas are not realized and the desired result will not be achieved.

The Endurance of Works Depending on the Endurance of the Building

In interviewed about technique with Arbaboon, this expert in the Mural Department says:

“The Department divided city walls into two groups: enduring and semi-enduring. [Enduring walls include the sides of bridges, special buildings like Ministries, the Parliament, and semi-enduring walls include private estates, the walls of residential or commercial buildings.] Semi-enduring walls are privately owned; therefore they might be demolished unexpectedly. In a similar manner, techniques are also divided into enduring and semi-enduring based on the type of the wall on which they are executed. Enduring techniques include materials like ceramics, mosaic and glass that endure for 30 to 40 years. Semi-enduring techniques include materials like color and digital prints. Among these, color technique is the least expensive. But a technique like
concrete relief which entails molding and installation is a time-consuming and expensive process.”

**Color Techniques and Its Stages**

In the last ten years in Tehran, artists have tried not to use plastic color very often because it vanishes sooner than other colors. Oil color and car paint are not suitable for buildings either because they are oil-based. Instead, artists have focused on acrylic color which endures for five years. But generally, all sorts of colors in Tehran with its high pollution and bright sunlight pale rapidly, especially the red color. Shoeibi said in his interview:

“In the Mural Council, we chose acrylic colors that had self-cleaning abilities.” The researcher has found that these self-cleaning paints were benefitting from Nano technology. Nano colors are self-cleaning in that they do not allow dirty particles such as nicotine and carbon stains to adhere to the outer walls of the building. Nano particles use sunlight and the porous structure of resin to transform dirty particles into harmless CO\(_2\). Wind and rain will then wash away the salts thus formed.”

Arbaboon stated,

After choosing materials and technique, execution stages start which include the cleaning and washing of the walls done by water jet and sandblast. Then the wall is covered by cement and if there is a need for repair, it is done and finally a layer of black cement is applied. Then come the stage of priming and applying a layer of white cement, covered by a layer of acrylic primer. The next stage is transferring the design and finally it is time for painting the work.

Shoeibi approves of the usage of acrylic primer, explaining that,

The acrylic primer turned out to be a good waterproof insulation. We used it first on the outer wall of a house which had a small garden against this wall. When the daily irrigation of the garden soil did not affect the mural of the outer wall after a while, we understood that the acrylic
primer was a suitable insulator protecting the mural from the dampness of the garden.

**Pricing**

When asked about the pricing of murals, Arbaboon explained that, for setting budgets, we usually have a general price based on square meter. For murals several stages need to be carried out, namely, preparing, priming, transferring the design, applying materials and painting. Sometimes one or more of these stages have already been done on the destined wall, in which case the prices of these stages are subtracted from the general price.

**Conclusion**

Mural is a social art, directly reaching to people and creating a visual feeling in the spectators that on the one hand can exalt their visual preference and on the other hand raise a sense of security, peace and positive energy in them. Above all, by introducing familiar elements and motifs in a strong frame created by visual knowledge and contemporary techniques, mural has successfully played a vital role in reviving ethnic memories and rearing cultural and social development.
Bibliography


