



Issue 1
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FRESCO MAGAZINE

STREET ART: THE PLAYING FIELD

Features

Interview with Tristan Manco, "Shred the Love" by Dr. Ulrich Blanché

Portfolios

Aaron Li-Hill

Dear readers of fresco magazine,

In contemporary art, we always talk about breaking boundaries and challenging perspectives; yet in street art, we ask where the boundary lies, what happens after the boundary dissolves, and whether those boundaries should even be obeyed. Deeply rooted in the streets while revolting against them, street art is an interesting playing field where the canons in art history, criminology, public policies, cultural studies, and urban studies come to merge. Before devoting this magazine to the specific, and likely more comprehensible themes, Issue 1 hopes to examine the raw and organic look of street art in the past decades. It's exciting that we have gathered voices from those actively engaged in the genre with profoundly different roles. These writers, artists, and art historians speak to each other without necessarily addressing the same range of questions. In a row of 4 issues, FRESCO Magazine hopes to serve as a contact zone for readers who choose to live through the meaning of art, to convene, converse, and depart from the ground.

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Electric Currents - Aaron Li
Bushwick Collective, Brooklyn, USA
Aerosol + Acrylic on Wall
2014

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TRISTAN MANCO

Interview with Tristan Manco

Maria Fernanda Gonzalez & Baylee Mckeel



How did you first discover your love for street art? Was there any one artist that piqued your interest, or do you have anyone that has recently inspired you?

I've always had my eye on walls, even before graffiti and street art as we know it now took off in the United Kingdom. As a kid in the late 70s and early 80s, all you would see is names or slogans and it would always intrigue me to read these passing signs of the times. But it was through books that I first got introduced to another more exciting world of street art, firstly with *Subway Art* (of course!) & then *Paris Graffiti*. I bought these books when they came out from a book shop in Bristol and both set me along a path I didn't expect. Having *Subway Art* in my hands led me to start doodling my own graffiti letters in my school books, it was infectious. Later, *Paris Graffiti* opened my eyes to the stencil art phenomenon that had taken off in the early 80s in Paris. In the United Kingdom at the time, we had not seen these types of graffiti with our own eyes, so it was down to kids to try things out for themselves from what they saw in these books and movies. For myself, I was particularly drawn to stencil art, it just seemed like magic. I started to cut stencils at school and decorate things with them

and later try spraying them on walls. It was all just for fun, Pop Art stuff, but it was a way into art in general. I still feel the same way about stencils – whether you are five years old or a hundred and five it's something everyone can try to do and make an image. It engages people into art or poetry or protest, a simple starting point into the world of art and street art.

Years later, things came full circle for me when I proposed to author my first book *Stencil Graffiti* with Thames and Hudson. With the book I wanted to document the new global movement of stencil art that was beginning to grow in the late 90s and link it to its earlier origins. I just happened to be living in Bristol at the time, when Banksy began to put up his very first stencils in around 1997. Two years later, he had covered the whole of Bristol and was starting to paint elsewhere. I became an instant fan and at the same time had been a fan of earlier Bristol-based stencil pioneers such as 3D from Massive Attack and Nick Walker. So much was coming out of Bristol, but also popping up in Oxford, Brighton & London. I proposed

my book in 1999, but it took some time to put together and finally came out in 2002, by which time stencils and other forms of street art were blowing up. As I travelled to a number of European cities to make *Stencil Graffiti*, it opened my eyes to a new wave of street art or Post-Graffiti, completely different to the first wave that came out of New York in 70s and 80s. I met artists like Space Invader in around 2000 and so many others that eventually led to writing the next book *Street Logos*, which came out in 2004.

I certainly got the bug for writing books as a way of exploring what was going on in these early days of a new street art movement. I was interested to know what motivated these new artists and give a context to the work beyond just reproducing images of their work. Since then I have remained a street art advocate and specifically how it can continue to work effectively in terms of creativity, community and communication.



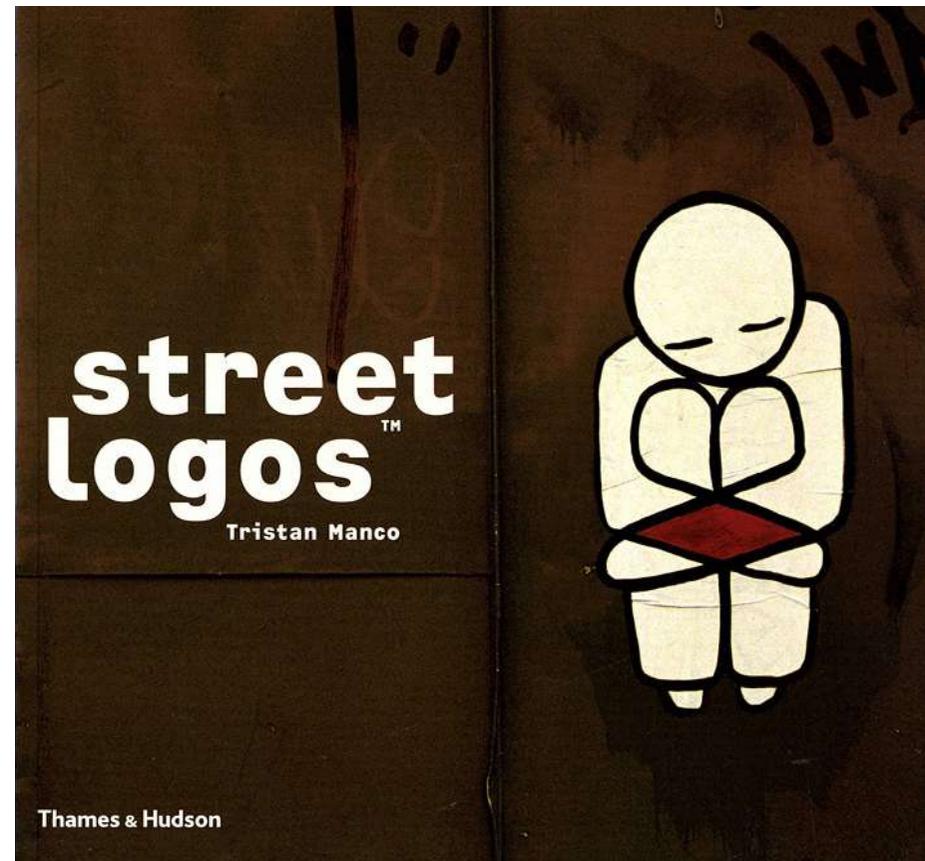
Graffiti Brasil - Tristan Manco
Published by Thames & Hudson

As a native Londoner who lived several years in Bristol, how has the United Kingdom street art scene influenced your thinking? Does it hold a special significance for you?

I was born in London but have never lived there, certainly Bristol has had the biggest influence for me in terms of my background knowledge and artist friendships. Bristol was my home for nearly twenty years and I continue to live nearby. I've followed the careers of a number of generations of Bristolian artists and indeed artists settled there from all over the country based on its reputation as a graffiti art city. I've already mentioned some known for stencils, but it has supported a huge range of great artists working all kinds of styles, from traditional graffiti to the more avant-garde. All that said, in terms of my tastes and interests I have more of an affinity with art in Continental Europe (I am half-Portuguese), I love the street art that has come out of Paris, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Lisbon, Berlin... The United Kingdom can feel a bit straight and not as colourful in comparison. Then moving on to my big love, which is Latin America – one of my books is focused solely on Brazilian street art and graffiti and other books I've written feature many artists from Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Chile, etc... For me this is where street art really comes alive!

How have your personal travels and your experience wandering cities like a flâneur influenced your thinking and creative work?

I am lucky to have been able to travel and experience things first hand. I feel more of an affinity with an artist, for instance if I have met them personally and have more of an understanding of where and how they live. I try to make things an exchange – to exchange ideas and, where possible, support artists in projects and through guidance. With some young street artists, they are often at the beginning of an art career, so they are always interested to think about their next steps. It's nice to have encouraging conversations about where their work might be going. Over the last 18 years I have always had some involvement in teaching art, usually as a guest lecturer or tutor at various colleges and universities in the United Kingdom. I enjoy that role in a similar way, encouraging young artists with their work and through my books showing examples of really creative and inspiring work.



Street Logos - Tristan Manco
Published by Thames & Hudson

How do you approach a city and its street art scene? What method do you use to scout out a city and find new works?

It really depends on my travels and what I have travelled to do, whether I am guest to a project or if I am just exploring. I guess one example to give is Graffiti Brasil, this really was an exploration. In the first instance, as a gringo and not having visited Brazil before, I knew that it would be best to team up with others, to show respect for other people's knowledge. For this project I teamed up with Lost Art, a couple of Brazilian photographers who had been documenting the scene for a while, and Caleb Neelon, an American journalist who had been visiting Brazil for some time similarly documenting street art in Sao Paulo. We decided to take on different parts of Brazil, with all of us documenting Sao Paulo. I travelled to Rio, Curitiba and Porto Alegre and mostly by meeting the local artists I got to know about the local scenes and where to look to document the street. At the time there was no book about graffiti in Brazil, so we took time to interview people about its history, etc. It was about first-hand knowledge in that way. Sao Paulo is massive, so I would spend days and weeks trying to visit different zones by subway or on a bicycle I borrowed. I went back seven times over the years and made many amazing friends. In the end it was all about the people there, their talent, ideas and their art.

You identify as an artist above your other roles, how do you think this identity differs from other researchers or educators in the street art scene? How has it influenced your experience differently?

My background is as an illustrator, I trained to make images. But later I re-trained as a graphic designer, although with a leaning towards art and illustration in my design work.

As an illustrator and art director I am a visual sponge, as such I have always been looking to art, comic art, street art, in search of creativity, inspiration and pure enjoyment! My motivation as an author has been to share what I find interesting and inspiring - to make books that look at the creativity that has come from street art, public art and graffiti movements. I don't feel tied to street art as a genre, many of my books feature artists from other fields too, but what I like about street art is its artistic freedom and the particular way it engages. I guess I am lucky to have had the support of my publisher to be a free agent and explore what I think is exciting and sometimes that takes me to different subjects, such as my book *Raw+Material=Art: Found, Scavenged and Upcycled*, which looks at the relationship artists have to their materials.

You have collaborated with many influential writers and scholars, forming a circle of leading professionals on street art. How do you feel that these collaborative efforts have aided in the promotion of an art form where artists have traditionally been concerned with their own individual persona?

I have not collaborated with any other writers or scholars in any of the work that I have produced as an author, other than the Graffiti Brasil book which was co-authored project.

However, I have attended talks and seminars around the world where I have learnt about other researchers work and had the chance to meet different people with differing perspectives, which has been interesting. Street art is an engaging topic with many opposing ways of looking at it, so I think it works well to have differing voices and narratives in its discussion.

You have published two “Street Sketchbooks” which survey various artists sketches; why do you believe it is important to engage with not only finished works but with a work in progress?

It comes down to my background from my art student days to now. I’ve always used sketchbooks so I wanted to share my enthusiasm for them. From an educator’s perspective, it is to show others that the ideas that street artists come up with are the result of lots of development and do not come fully formed. It is also a metaphor for each artist developing his or her personal creative universe.

A number of artists, including yourself, have taken to Instagram. What are your thoughts on social media and its involvement in street art? Moreover, how have you used Instagram to promote street art and engage with the wider social media-savvy audience?

Instagram has really changed the game and I’m not sure yet to what extent...

Graffiti fans have been using the Internet since its earliest days. I remember going to Internet cafes to log into Art Crimes, the first graffiti website (since 1994). It was a way to see what other people were doing around the world, before that the only way was through graffiti magazines. In the late 90s, graffiti artists started to use Fotolog to upload pictures and find like-minded people, next up it was Flickr... These were places you could find obscure artists and young kids posting up photos of walls or sketches. Today the Instagram app has blown all these smaller sites out of the water in volume of images and people, I guess something even more mind-blowing will eventually take its place. From my own perspective I try to just post things that I like, my own work, friends, family, etc. I think if you try to be too clever with it you will

just get sucked in. I think it would be a shame if the algorithms win out and make it a meaningless experience, at the moment I enjoy the fact that everyone is potentially equal, and you can discover artists who are just starting out, and at the same time, follow artists who are big names.



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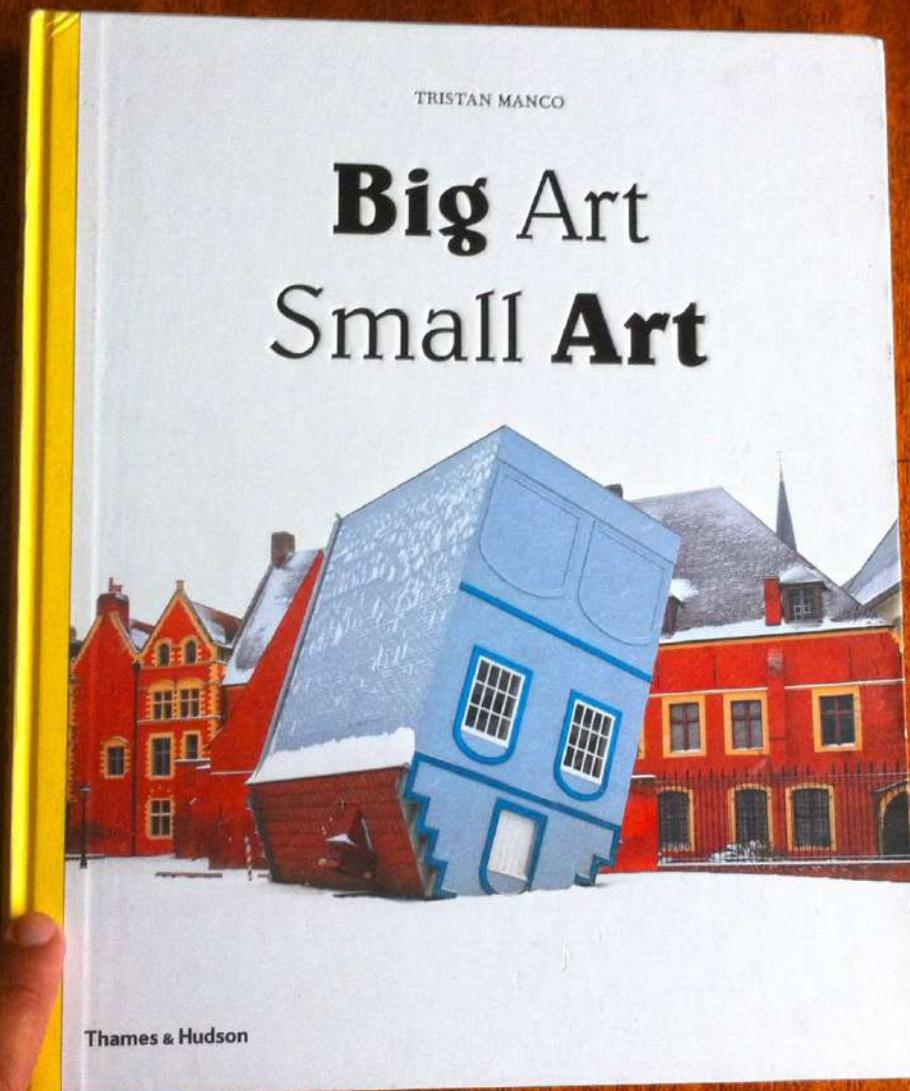


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In the ever competitive and evolving art scene, how do you stay current and in the know?

I try not to think in terms of competition. If I am planning a new book, I like to make sure that nobody has already done one on the same particular topic or theme. I try to look beyond the usual suspects in terms of artists; if someone has already been featured in many current books then I try to choose someone maybe less known or show an artist's work in a new way. I think we can all stay current by engaging in new things and allowing yourself to follow your personal instincts and interests. If you keep looking at the same things and get into a comfort zone, then many things may pass you by. I don't suffer from FOMO (fear natural urge, all the interesting artists I know personally are constantly looking at who and what is out there, absorbing influences... I get a lot of brilliant suggestions of artists to look at from other artists.

What's next for Tristan Manco?
A new book to be published in 2020...



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BANKSY: SHRED THE LOVE

Dr. Ulrich Blanché

On 5 October 2018 British Street Artist Banksy did what he did on the street for more than 20 years, he performed art where it was not expected, this time in an auction house, Sotheby's London, where people buy art as commodities. The art world does not attend an auction to contemplate art (although that might happen accidentally there as well). When collectors spend hundreds of thousands like at the "Contemporary Art Evening Sale" at Sotheby's London they usually know what they are looking for: No alarms and no surprises please.¹ Banksy's shredding of his Girl and Balloon had both, an alarm and surprises. At time of writing this paper, three weeks after the incident, more than 18 Million people saw the work on Instagram and Youtube alone. It might be Banksy's best known work until 2018.

All illegal Street Art or graffiti has a notion of performance art,² not just this Banksy work of shredding a canvas version of his famous Girl and Balloon motif. "Graffiti is an art form where the gesture is at least as important as the result, if not more so. I read how a critic described Jackson Pollock as a performance artist who happened to use paint, and the same could be said for Graffiti writers—performance artists who happen to use paint. And trespass."³ Banksy's Street Art and his other public art is usually not a performance according to the usual meaning of the term - in general, performers perform in front of an audience. However, his street works frequently carry the information that "something happened" on this particular spot. This something is very often the illegal attachment of a piece of Street Art to a surface in a public space. Its adventurous, cheeky, bold attachment is part of the artwork.⁴ The kitschy notion of Girl and Balloon became more authentic again with

the performance Banksy attached to it 15 years after its first appearance. The performance functions like a street context. In a museum a little girl with a balloon is barely sufferable kitsch, but on the west bank separation barrier where Banksy stenciled a different version of it for instance in 2005, it became a political artwork.

Banksy first entitled a photo of his shredding action as Going, going, gone...,⁵ giving the well-known auction chant a notion of destroying artworks in general. Once they are sold, artworks might be gone as they might be hidden in private collectors' homes or entrepôts, sometimes for decades. As a Street Artist Banksy prefers art that is available for everyone: public art.

After that first photo Banksy captured a short video of the performance with "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge - Picasso"⁶, a quote he used before⁷ and that might be not by Picasso but by the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin who died before Picasso was born. The first time Banksy used that quote he was referring to illegal street art, to the old "is vandalism art?" question (yes - it can be both at the same time). This time Banksy tried to breathe new life into his already old and sucked dry signature hit Girl and Balloon whose first version dates back at least to 6 October 2003 when an early prototype, maybe the first version of Balloon Girl appeared on the back cover of the Blur single record Good Song. In this early context, Girl and Balloon corresponded to the front cover picture of the same record cover, called Kids on Guns which shows the same girl still holding the balloon with a boy on a pile of weapons. This two-picture-story of first Kids on Guns and then Balloon Girl recalls the lyrics of the song about love ("And you seem very beautiful to me") and (anti-)war ("there ain't no war in my head").

Girl and Balloon needed an update, it had become an artwork of the establishment; as one of the most well-known Banksy works the motif—not this particular version—became even Britain's favorite work of art in 2017.⁸ If Banksy had not done his shredding performance on 5 October 2018 at Sotheby's, the newspaper headline would have been "Auction record for Banksy". Never did a work done by Banksy alone sell for over a million Dollars, Pounds or Euros, although a collaboration with Damien Hirst brought 1.87million Dollars in 2007.⁹ Like Banksy's earlier screen print dealing with auction prices called "I can't believe you morons actually buy this shit" (2007), Banksy's 2018 shredding action can be understood as a rejection of the art world, an anti-private-ownership message of artworks and a rejection of the high prices that are paid for artworks.

1. This is a quote from a Radiohead song from 1998 called No Surprises.

2. U. Blanché, Banksy. Urban Art in a Material World, Marburg: Tectum, p. 53.

3. K. Hamilton, Village Voice Exclusive: An Interview With Banksy, Street Art Cult Hero, International Man of Mystery, Village Voice: 10 October 2013, <https://www.laweekly.com/arts/village-voice-exclusive-an-interview-with-banksy-street-art-cult-hero-international-man-of-mystery-4184696>

4. U. Blanché, Banksy. Urban Art in a Material World, Marburg: Tectum, p. 53.

5. Banksy, R., Going, going, gone... Instagram, 6 October 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bokt2sEhlsu/>

6. Banksy, "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge"- Picasso, Instagram video, 6 October 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BomXijJhArX/>

7. Banksy, Banging your head against a brick wall, London 2001, n.p.

8. K. Archer, Banksy's 'Balloon Girl' beats paintings by Constable and Turner to be named Britain's favourite artwork, Independent, 25 July 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/banksy-britains-favourite-artwork-balloon-girl-john-constable-jack-vettriano-jmw-turner-a7858856.html>

9. U. Blanché, Banksy. Urban Art in a Material World, Marburg: Tectum, p. 53.



© The New York Times

Hirst, a Banksy supporter and collector since 2000, three times artistic collaborator and for years renter of Banksy's former studio, also "performed" a Sotheby's auction, ten years before Banksy: Hirst's "Beautiful Inside My Head Forever" auction with its most significant work, "The Golden Calf", a dead calf in a formaldehyde tank with horns of gold, began on the day the Lehman Brothers investment bank became the largest corporate failure in American financial history, and thus the poster child for the ensuing and ongoing financial crisis. At the same time Hirst bypassed with this auction his galleries and sold 224 new works of art directly from the studio at Sotheby's, which was considered a piece of auction performance art as well.¹ The former Young British Artist performed a dance around his Golden Calf at Sotheby's. I see this auction/performance similar to Banksy's shredding, and in one row with the usual suspects mentioned in media articles about the Banksy shredding, i.e. Gustav Metzger's Auto Destructive Art that started in 1959, or even earlier, Robert Rauschenberg's Erased de Kooning Drawing, 1953. Like Banksy, Rauschenberg also erased his own works before the De Kooning drawing. When Metzger destroyed canvases with acid, he did that as a performance, like Banksy later. Unlike Banksy's Girl and Balloon Metzger's canvases were unused, they were not even art before he destroyed them, just material. Metzger and Banksy are/were both political artists, their performances carried an anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist message. Rauschenberg's Erased de Kooning Drawing is rather l'art pour l'art, it does not carry a political message. All three artists created new objects but only Rauschenberg aimed to do that and to create a sellable work. Both Metzger and Banksy focused on the action of destroying, their photo/video documentation is more important than the relicts of their performances. Banksy approached the destruction of his works neither from the conceptual nor academic side of art. As a former illegal graffiti

writer and vandal, Banksy has destroyed works of other graffiti writers or street artists for 25 years and he is used to his works being destroyed as well, in his words: "If you don't like it, you can paint over it."² Banksy seems to disprize the art world's fetish of "the original" and the single work. As a stencil artist and a former graffiti writer Banksy first and foremost creates motifs made for repetition, not single works. He could repeat Girl and Balloon within seconds, the object and its ownership is not important.

So far so plausible, but after the first wave of interest the first questions appeared: Why was the painting hanging on the wall when usually paintings in frames are presented on an easel during auction? How come Sotheby's did not examine the frame properly? Was it a coincidence that Sotheby's presented the work as the last one in auction? If the shredding would have happened during the first half there might have been chaos. Why was the painting only half shredded? To keep its value? How come the batteries of the shredder lasted for 12 years? According to Sotheby's, the work was bought at Banksy's "Barely Legal" show in Los Angeles in 2006 by its first owner who put it up for auction in 2018 (Sotheby's 2018). In the mentioned short video posted on Instagram Banksy stated: "A few years ago I secretly built a shredder into a painting in case it was ever put up for auction".³ Many people changed their view on this particular Banksy performance and thought Banksy collaborated with Sotheby's.

1. Ibid., p.110, Germaine Greer: Germaine Greer Note to Robert Hughes: Bob, dear, Damien Hirst is just one of many artists you don't get. Guardian Online 22 September 2008 and Nicholas Cullinan: Dreams that money can buy. In: Pop Life. Kat Aust. Tate Modern 2009, p. 75.

2. Banksy quoted in BBC News: Artist throws anti-Jubilee party, 31 May 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/2018739.stm>

3. Banksy, "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge"- Picasso, Instagram video, 6 October 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BomXijJhArX/>

What really happened to Girl and Balloon?

This led to much speculation until Banksy felt impelled to publish a second, longer explanation video less than two weeks later entitled either “Shredding the Girl and Balloon - the Director’s cut” or “Shredding the Girl and Balloon - The Director’s half cut” or “Shred the love – The director’s cut”,¹ word-playing with film cut (director’s cut) and the cutting of the (half) painting. In this video, Banksy claimed: “Some people think it didn’t really shred. It did. Some people think the auction house were in on it, they weren’t.”²

A plausible story was colported by art critic Kenny Schacter shortly before Banksy’s second video that fit with details of that video. According to Schacter’s source the performance happened as follows: Without divulging their identity “someone from Banksy’s publicity team contacted Sotheby’s to sell the painting Girl and Balloon, but that the consignment came with stipulations, more or less as follows: A. the painting had to be hung in the salesroom during the sale” This explains retrospectively the unusual placement of the painting to guarantee the shredder would work which would not have been the case if it was placed on an easel like it was common. “ B. “it needed to be sold in the latter half of the proceedings”, retrospectively not to cause chaos during auction and, C. “it wasn’t to be examined out of the frame.”³ Banksy obviously did not want Sotheby’s to find the shredder. Sotheby’s supported this version of the story in a statement: “When we asked the artist’s studio about removing the work from its frame during the cataloguing process, we were expressly told not to. We were told that the frame (which was glued) was integral to the work; breaking it would damage the work, and negatively impact its artistic value. This is not unusual—consider Lucio Fontana’s lacquer frames, or George Condo’s frames that include labels on the back saying do not remove from frame. If you remove the frame you violate the artist’s wishes and destroy the artwork. Our catalogue entry for the work describes that the work as is an ‘artist’s frame’. The certificate we received from the artist’s studio stated that the frame was ‘integral to the piece.’”⁴ In the second video it became obvious that the frame was locked from behind,⁵ Sotheby’s would have had to destroy it to examine the canvas. Schacter

went on: “As it’s not the norm to hang a relatively inconsequentially valued painting in the room (the pre-sale estimate was £200,000 to £300,000) during an evening auction, the house replied no. The consignor countered by offering to pay a seller’s fee of around 5 percent. (That this person wasn’t automatically charged to place the work in the auction indicates that this was not a new relationship, and I’m told this PR liaison acts as a regular, go-to conduit for Banksy to feed art into the auction stream). The response from Sotheby’s came back again in the negative, at which point the consignor raised the ante to around 10 percent, and Sotheby’s acceded—the deal was done. The auction house certainly suspected something was afoot, by the very nature of the dialogue leading up to the sale, but I can assure you that is all they knew.” The video revealed also there was someone in the audience with a remote control who started the shredding⁶ and that Banksy had planned to shred the whole work, not just parts of it: “In rehearsals it worked every time...”⁷



© CNN

1. Banksy, Shredding the Girl and Balloon - the Director’s cut. Link in bio. Some people think it didn’t really shred. It did. Some people think the auction house were in on it, they weren’t. Instagram, 17 October 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BpDMo26h3Cu/>

2. Ibid.

3. K. Schacter, Here’s What Really Happened With Banksy’s Art-Shredding Stunt at Sotheby’s, According to Kenny Schacter’s Source, Artnews, 17 October 2018, <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/kenny-schacter-on-banksy-at-sothebys-stunt-1372921?fbclid=IwAR109EknlGPmf1oTdCP6fV-JS-uNx1SXMCGPmCGdjNdntZiZiJtPAXPMRO>

4. Ibid.

5. Banksy, Youtube video, 17 October 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxkwRNIZgdY>, TC 0:19 min.

6. Ibid., TC 2:05 min.

7. Ibid., TC 2:37 min.

Conclusion

Although Banksy seemed to have planned to shred the whole canvas the fact that it did not work was, from a visual point of view, a helpful coincidence. The viewer could see the whole process in one picture, start and end, before and after, visible in one photo. Banksy lied when he claimed: "A few years ago I secretly built a shredder into a painting in case it was ever put up for auction". It seemed not to be a few years ago. It seemed not to be sold in 2006. It seemingly was put up for auction by himself. The quote sounded like a threat to Banksy-artwork-owners not to re-sell his works, something he claimed already in 2003 when he prohibited the reselling of a pair of shoes he designed

in a certificate that ended with: "Remember-that a culture where property is more important than people is a fucked culture."¹ Like public artist Daniel Buren, who tried to strictly limit the reselling of his works via so-called "avertissements"² that exclude his works from his œuvre if resold without permission. Banksy at least symbolically tries to keep control, especially in the case of Sotheby's as they did an unauthorized retrospective of his work in 2014,³ otherwise a no-go for a contemporary artist. Banksy's quote strengthens the point his shredding already made: "I secretly built a shredder [...] in case it was ever put up for auction". Banksy's work criticizes the sums that collectors

pay for art at auctions in general and he criticizes private ownership of art. Banksy's performance put the idea higher than the physical result. Although, as many claimed, the physical work might have an even higher value after the performance. But this also might be the case, if Banksy would have burned the canvas. Sotheby's might have sold the ashes for 2 millions afterwards. Someone will always fish a rotten banknote from a stinking toilet if it is financially valuable enough. To reduce the value of Banksy's performance to financial values is to miss the point.

1. Banksy, Certificate of Authenticity, Turf War Puma Sneakers, 2003 <https://www.instagram.com/p/BmmH5oBg3ck/?taken-by=arthunter999>

2. M. Eichhorn Interview with Daniel Buren, 1997, in: Florian Matzner (ed.), Public Art. Kunst im öffentlichen Raum. Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz 2001, p. 665-673.

3. Sotheby's, Banksy, Girl with Balloon, 2006. Lot 67. Contemporary Art Evening Auction, 05 October 2018. <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2018/contemporary-art-evening-auction-l18024/lot.67.html>

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Ulrich Blanché is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Heidelberg after he completed his Ph.D. degree of Art History in the Friedrich Alexander University. Blanché received a master degree of Professional Communication in the Western University, and a master degree in Art History, Theatre and Film Sciences in the University Erlangen. His dissertation was on the topic of "The Street Artist Banksy." He

published three books on Banksy and Street Art. His research focuses on street art, and he believed that street Art consists of self-authorized signs created in the urban space that intentionally seek communication with a larger circle of people.

HOW SOTHEBY'S EMBRACED STREET ART AND THE BANKSY SCANDAL

2018/10/19

Baylee Mckeel



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Street art has existed for centuries, yet only recently have the scholarly efforts attached to the art form become recognized. Since the early 2000s, scholars from around the globe have begun to devote their entire careers to the academic study of street art. These scholars are pioneers leading the way in the study of street art, and this is why we have established the street art initiative. In this day and age we have reached a point in history where people from all countries and all backgrounds are paying attention to street art, where art of this kind is now a widely sought commodity represented by international auction houses and galleries and sold for record breaking amounts. As such, these efforts must be recognized. We believe in acknowledging those individuals who have devoted their lives to street art. We aim to

connect them with one another and to build a cohort of international thinkers from various backgrounds and perspectives. This series is dedicated to those individuals and to the rise of Street Art Now.

Since hosting the first major show of Banksy in 2014 Sotheby's continues to "[capture] on the momentum of street art's growing popularity."¹ However, the very involvement of a behemoth auction house, a capitalist institution, in what is historically a very public and controversial art form brings about many questions on profit, temporality, and accessibility. Each of these concerns manifests itself in the scandalous, yet oh so typically Banksy-esq, self-destructing canvas that appeared at the Sotheby's auction in London on October 5th. In a shocking turn of events, *Girl with*

Balloon (2006) began to obliterate itself via a hidden shredder within the frame once auctioneer Oliver Barker had officially declared it sold. The next day Banksy posted a video of the incident on his Instagram account. Whether or not the auction house was aware of the spectacle is yet to be determined. But, a few things are certain. Both Banksy and Sotheby's benefitted from the event.

1. <https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/from-the-streets-the-rise-of-urban-art>

© The Guardian



Sotheby's has since received global exposure as the world continues to argue over whether this incident was a hoax, nothing more than a PR stunt, or a pivotal event of art historical significance. Creativity born from destruction, *Girl with Balloon* was quite literally transformed into a never before seen artwork in front of a live audience. Banksy's authentication body, Pest Control, even issued a certificate of authenticity for

the new work of art. Half shredded and dangling from the bottom of the frame, the piece has now become *Love is in the Bin*. A multitude of factors point towards the involvement of the auction house despite claims that they had no prior knowledge of the event. There is also the question of only shredding the piece halfway. If Banksy's agenda was to upset Sotheby's and rebel against a capitalist system by effectively shredding

\$1.4 million in front of the wealthy few capable of attending such an auction, then why only shred half of the canvas? Half of the existing work is now estimated to be worth at least double the original sale price.

No matter your stance on the issue it is nearly impossible to deny the genius behind such a daring move. With or without the inside help from Sotheby's, Banksy turned the tables on a world-famous institution. Taking advantage of the auction, the element of surprise, and the swift moving current of the Internet, he cleverly increased the value of his work while simultaneously encouraging a worldwide discussion about profit and the temporality of his art. Future auctions that feature Banksy will no doubt be charged with anticipation as bidders wait for the next self-destructing canvas or some other mischievous and daring move. Widely known for his street art, this incident brings the artist full circle as he blurs the lines between traditional and non-traditional, questioning the separation of high and low art. Paint on a canvas is thought to be a concrete, stable, and reliable form of art. Yet Banksy has made it as ethereal as paint splashed across a wall, subject to instability and destruction. Through Instagram he has also challenged limited accessibility, bringing his art to the public and opening the doors to an exclusive million-dollar auction. Like all street art, the beauty of Banksy's shredded canvas comes in its ability to incite discussion, to begin tough and thoughtful conversations. Is Banksy a typical capitalist who has gone to extremes solely to increase the value of his work? Is he the epitome of anti-capitalism in

destroying a symbol of money and power right before the eyes of those who treasure such symbols of wealth and luxury? Is he brilliantly doing both, simultaneously profiting off of and actively commenting on such a system? There is no simple answer, but he certainly has us talking.

Sotheby's itself has consistently supported the rise of street art and valued the importance of this art form in sparking such discussions. They recently collaborated with the Movember Foundation, the leading men's mental health organization, to present *Against the Wall*, a charity sale spearheaded by artist and gallery owner Dean Stockton, better known as D*Face. Sales will benefit the foundation's mental health programs. Nine artists such as D*Face, Shepard Fairey, Invader, Alexis Diaz, Okuda, Vhils, Felipe Pantone, Conor Harrington, and Jonathan Yeo have donated works to be auctioned off on November 20th. They will be on view from November 16th to the 19th and include works such as D*Face's *Console the Lonely*. This work embodies the spirit of the sale and encourages men to turn to one another for consolation and guidance in a society that has grown toxic towards the outward expression of male emotions. Carrying the slogan, "be a man of more words," the sale encourages men to acknowledge feelings that are too often bottled

up and ignored. These pieces will be included in Sotheby's next edition of *Contemporary Curated* in London and will be sold alongside the likes of Andy Warhol, Richard Prince, John Baldessari, Tony Cragg and Andreas Gursky. The inclusion of these nine donated works with notable artists such as those listed above reflects the extensive growth that street art has witnessed and that Sotheby's has supported. In December of last year Sotheby's Hong Kong held a charity auction which benefitted the Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation (HOCA) and featured 32 works donated by 29 international artists including Zevs, Invader, Shepard Fairey, Cleon Peterson, José Parlá, Vhils, and Zhang Dali, among others. It was an unprecedented sale solely dedicated to street art with final sales results that exceeded \$370,000. An accessory to the growth of street art, Sotheby's has been aiding and abetting the rise of artists like Banksy who are just as likely to hoax the art market as they are to appreciate it. Whether they are shredding their own work in a performance made public or donating it for altruistic purposes, this is an art for the people, an art inciting change and discussion, an art defying boundaries with a momentum that Sotheby's has embraced.

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Baylee McKeel graduated magna cum laude from New York University with art history honors. She holds a BA in art history with minors in Italian studies and social and cultural analysis. She completed an honors thesis on Jusepe de Ribera's early paintings and the dilemma of Caravaggism in early seventeenth-century European painting. She has previously worked in the curatorial department at the New Orleans Museum of

Art, and with the collection manager at NYU's Villa la Pietra in Florence, Italy. She has extensive research and writing experience, having written and published various articles for *Musée Magazine*. She recently held positions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim Museum of Art performing comprehensive research and assisting in funding and special events.

THE RISE OF STREET ART : HOW ARTISTS SUCH AS INVADER, ZEVS, AND SHEPARD FAIREY WENT FROM STREET WALL TO TOP AUCTION HOUSES

2018/10/25

Baylee Mckeel



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Street artists have faced arrest, persecution, exile, and banishment in the face of their work. And it has never stopped them. Established street artist Invader cited the death penalty as the only threat capable of ceasing his 'invasion'. So how has an art form rooted in dissent and globally recognized as a criminal offense become an enthusiastically sought after commodity sold across the world for millions of dollars? The cultural shift that occurred in the past century is an incredible phenomenon that has led to a wide spread obsession with street art. Artists that began their careers illegally tagging trains are now equated with fine art and found in museums, galleries, and auctioned off at Sotheby's and Christie's. Even so, anonymity continues to play a large role in the street art scene, a reminder of an illicit and rebellious past. Invader, who has been carrying out a large-scale project called Space Invaders since 1998, continues to work under an alias. His project comprises the illegal plastering of pixelated mosaics in 77 cities and counting and has indeed met resistance. A gallery owner that worked with the artist spent two weeks in jail, and Invader himself is banned from a number of countries. However illegal, today his works are worth upwards of \$100,000. Contested, arrested, and copied, illegal art is ironically sold in legal auctions and is now admired and studied by many.

Controversial from its creation, street art continuously pushes boundaries. This past January Invader made a trip to Bhutan, where he plastered his mosaics onto historic and sacred sites such as Cheri Goemba, Bhutan's first monastery. The video he posted to his Instagram account enraged some but inspired others. His audience remains split despite Invader's claims that he had "the blessing of the monks," and was asked by the chief monk to install the work on site.¹ The incident caused many to ponder their own moral and ethical boundaries and sparked discussions around art, space

and place, and our relationship and responsibility to our surroundings. It is precisely the ability to engender such debate that is at the core of street art, and in the words of French street artist Zevs, "a work of art without a core will only survive a short period..."² Zevs is widely known for his Liquidation series in which he paints over institutional logos, causing them to melt and dissolve right before our eyes. An early member of the growing graffiti scene, Zevs was arrested in Hong Kong for spray-painting a Chanel logo onto a Giorgio Armani store. Yet, he refers to his artistic experience in Hong Kong as "one of the most intense experiences thus far in [his] career."³ He compares the experience to a game of chess. The King Chanel and Queen Armani were his opponents in a fight that was set across the entire city of Hong Kong.⁴ Compelled to prove to a judge that his actions were artistic and not criminal, the experience was a pivotal one that forced the artist to question his own artistic motives. As a kid, he was almost crushed by a train while writing in a dark railway tunnel; the train was code-named Zevs. Arrest and near-death experiences have not hindered the artist but have motivated him. Indeed, despite his six-week stint in a Hong Kong jail, his works ironically sold at Sotheby's in Hong Kong for upwards of \$30,000 in 2016.⁵ Zevs continues to fuse a street art disposition with Pop Art-like appropriations of popular culture to simultaneously highlight and undermine the power of consumer culture. His art forces society to confront its relationship to art and consumption in an ironic and unusual way. By using a company's logo against itself, he is at once acknowledging their power and attempting to strip it away. Zevs opens up a dialogue between big business and consumer, between society and our own deeply rooted obsessions and forces us to question them.

1. Rachel Corbett, The Street Artist Invader Has Struck Sacred Temples in Bhutan and Even His Fans Are Furious, January 31, 2018. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/street-artist-invader-sparks-outrage-over-tags-in-bhutans-buddhist-temples-1211636>

2. Alex Greenberger, Street Artist Zevs on Attacking Luxury Brands With Their Own Logos, September 12, 2013. https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/meet_the_artist/zevs-51556

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ilaria Maria Sala, Hong Kong hates street art—until it is worth a lot of money, March 23, 2016. <https://qz.com/645867/hong-kong-only-cares-about-street-art-when-it-is-worth-a-lot-of-money/>

Communication to provoke thought and change, this idea is central to other artists such as José Parlá, Vhils and Zhang Dali. Parlá, the son of Cuban immigrants, was a graffiti artist by the nickname Ease in Miami when one of his high school teachers recognized his talent. He went on to study at the Savannah College of Art and Design and is best known for his monumental calligraphic abstractions, including a large mural that welcomes visitors to New York City's One World Trade Center. His art is a reflection of the ephemeral layers of urban space, showing what has been and what has become, bringing the past into the present. His One World Trade Center mural, entitled ONE: Union of the Senses, is a large-scale symbol of diversity and unity. It is at once a celebration of life and a reminder of our past, encouraging communication and diplomatic conversation to incite change. In another exchange of past and present, artist Vhils dissects the history and memory that our lives are built on. He destroys in an act of creativity that facilitates change and open dialogue. Alexandre Farto, known as Vhils, has been a prolific graffiti writer since the early to mid 2000s. He was raised in Portugal during a time deeply affected by revolution and the destruction he witnessed would inspire his creations in later years. Vhils works by carving into walls, exposing the various layers underneath. He is widely known for his relief portraits, which utilize the patina of a city's history in order to create a work of art that straddles past and present. By chipping away at the surface, he unveils the history and culture hidden beneath. The result is an image that once again raises questions and begins a conversation around identity, life in a contemporary metropolis, and our relationship to these spaces and the history buried within them.

Like Vhils and Parlá utilize history and change to engender discussion and progress, artist Zhang Dali uses his work to comment on that ways in which the urban space has morphed the human experience. His earlier Dialogue & Demolition series from the late 1990s in Beijing comprises of a spray-painted silhouette often accompanied by his tag, AK-47, and/or a cutout of the silhouette which tears through the wall itself and exposes the city behind it. The cut out highlights the construction and destruction of a city in constant flux. Acting as a stand in for the artist himself, the silhouette allows the artist to be in continuous conversation with the space and those who come into contact with it. The title of his series emphasizes the colloquial intent of the series, meant to engage its audience in a meaningful dialogue with their surroundings. Zhang's relationship to the city itself is complex, as he was forced to flee Beijing following the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Fleeing to Italy, he returned in 1993 and shortly after began this

series. Intersections of history, dissections of culture, a conversation between time and experience, street art has a captivating power to engage a wide and global audience in important discussions that transcend time and inform on the future.

The unorthodox career paths that the majority of these artists take are an illustration of the unprecedented inclusivity that defines street art. Shepard Fairey was attending the Rhode Island School of Design when, inspired by skateboard culture, he had an idea to start a sticker campaign. Cited as an experiment in phenomenology, the sticker campaign is meant to stimulate curiosity, to bring people to question both the sticker and their surroundings on a larger level. Bearing the word, OBEY, the sticker itself has no actual meaning but rather takes on a different interpretation with each individual who comes into contact with it. The OBEY campaign continues today, even though Fairey himself is well known for other ventures. During the 2008 election Fairey created a poster of Obama with the word 'Hope' that exploded and became a symbol for the future president. The poster also elevated Fairey out of the skateboard and street art scene and into a global sphere. He has since used his platform to speak on more political matters and encourages others to raise their voices as well. Fairey's call for a more progressive and hopeful future contrasts perfectly with the ominous work of Cleon Peterson.

Peterson's work draws on an aesthetic reminiscent of classical Greco-Roman vases while depicting the violence and terror that is present in contemporary society. Using a style that harkens back to the ancients, Peterson brings history forward, reminding us that without intervention history will only repeat itself. It is through action that we achieve progress and through silence that we regress. Peterson's most recent body of work, Blood and Soil, takes its name from a Nazi slogan used to instill fear and to silence opposition, similar to contemporary political tactics of weaponized fear that manipulate people today. His work from this series, such as Little Man Big Man Putin bluntly attacks the Trump administration and American politics, confronting modern day concerns and forcing viewers to acknowledge the issues that are directly in front of them. From mosaics to spray-paint, destruction, creation, stickers, and straightforward illustrations of contemporary fear, these artists have risen to prominence from a variety of backgrounds, from cities all across the globe, and have risked arrest, exile, and banishment for their daring artworks. Once viewed as criminals tagging the streets and disrupting the status quo, this disruption is welcome today like a long lost friend. They offer critical commentary and incite vital conversations, and the value of their work

is more widely understood and celebrated as scholars dedicate their lives to the promotion and education of street art. Today Invader, Zevs, José Parlá, Vhils, Zhang Dali, Shepard Fairey, and Cleon Peterson are admired instead of hunted, praised instead of imprisoned, studied instead of scorned, and find themselves facing an audience eager to listen, eager to discuss, and even more eager to collect.



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THE COLLABORATIVE AGE OF STREET ART AND INCLUSIVE SCHOLARLY CONVERSATION: HOW THE STREET ART BOOM HAS OPENED UP ART TO THE PEOPLE

2018/11/6

Baylee Mckeel

The soul of street art exists in its dialogue with the public, yet by nature it has been an individual art, an isolated art completed under the veil of darkness and anonymity. Ironically, street art is very much meant to be seen but the artists themselves are not. Subject to lawful punishment throughout history, many have remained hidden. The consequence of such a secretive nature resulted in an isolated artist who worked alone under the cover of night. However, the recent obsession with street art has allowed many of these artists to exist in the light of day. Some have revealed their identity while others have chosen to continue working under an alias. The majority, however, have one public platform in common- Instagram. A social media site that engages through images and commentary, it is a perfect fit for street artists. Instagram offers celebrity within anonymity, engaging and connecting artists and audiences worldwide. In an age where international travel is as easy as opening up an app, the obsession with the individual self has fallen away in the face of creative collaboration. One artist who has shed his anonymity and very actively taken to Instagram is Shepard Fairey, also known as Obey Giant (@obeygiant). Fairey posts to his Instagram daily, keeping his audience up to date on all of his current projects and events. He has collaborated with various artists including Vhils and Cleon Peterson and has brought together many other artists through curated events.

Fairey's 2014 project, "Art Alliance: Provocateurs Show," which coincided with Chicago's Lollapalooza, brought together Invader, Cleon Peterson, D*Face, Keith Haring, Stanley Donwood and more. On two separate occasions, in Lisbon and in Los Angeles, Fairey and Vhils collaborated on a mural that fused the former's bold lines and vibrant colors with the latter's grey and black staccato rhythm of relief carving (@vhils). Cleon Peterson, a very good friend of Fairey's according to his website, came out with an Obey Clothing line that married his stylistically sharp, geometric lines with the recognizable figures of Obey Giant. A theme of the macabre, of course, lingers in the clothing line as Peterson's dystopian motif seeps through. On his

Instagram Peterson posted an image of an Invader mosaic that he added his own flair to (@cleonpeterson). A figure in the bulky shape of Peterson's often-violent characters is done in Invader's mosaic style and runs, dances, and interacts with one of his alien figures. Invader commented on the Instagram post with his typical space invader emoji, a sign of approval (@invaderwashere). A dialogue stretching from Portugal to California, sold on t-shirts and liked on Instagram, the ease of international accessibility and the ability to post and discuss their works in a public forum has engendered an unprecedented collaborative effort in street art.

Reflective of a growing communal responsibility among street artists themselves, scholars and academics have established research cohorts, seminars, conferences, festivals, and consorted together on publications dedicated to the study and promotion of this art. In Banksy: Urban Art in a Material World, scholar Ulrich Blanché discusses the collaborations between Damien Hirst and Banksy. In a 2016 interview Blanché compared the collaborative duo to Warhol and Basquiat saying, "The established artist gains coolness and the newer artist gains credibility."¹ Blanché is describing a symbiotic relationship between artists, one that allows them to expand their audiences, widen their scope, and challenge their own creative ability as they interact with other innovative techniques and ideas. Whether a large mural or a small mosaic done in reaction to another's work, these are pieces of a conversation happening within the street art scene. These conversations are made more complex as Instagram opens up the floor and invites the entire world to participate. Blanché himself has collaborated with other scholars through a number of symposiums. He was one of the speakers at the 2016 Art on the Streets symposium at the ICA in London, participant in a conference held by the Street Art and Urban Creativity Scientific Journal in 2014, and wrote the introduction, along with Ilaria Hoppe and Frank Eckardt, to Urban Art: Creating the Urban with Art. In that introduction Blanché discusses a piece that he saw in Berlin, part of Dave the Chimp's 'human beans' series. The orange

bean shape body had been painted over, and a pair of expressive eyes was added atop the haphazard paint job. This image stood out to Blanché as a dialogue between multiple authors on the street and over time, a highlight of street art's temporality. Upon contacting Dave the Chimp to inquire about the piece, he was told that it was actually the artist himself who had painted over his own work and added the eyes as a salute and symbolic reference to the dialogues happening on the street at any given time. Just as Instagram has served as a platform to widen exposure for street art, so too have these scholars sought to educate, promote, and inspire by bringing street art to the people. Through their engaging discussions they voice out loud what artists splash across cities.



1. Lois Stavsky, Ulrich Blanché on Banksy: Urban Art in a Material World, December 9, 2016. <http://streetartnyc.org/blog/2016/12/09/ulrich-blanche-on-banksy-urban-art-in-a-material-world/>



Tristan Manco, a leading figure on street art who has been actively involved with the street art scene for decades, embraces a wide assortment of projects in order to interact with the widest audience possible (@tristan_manco). His publications introduce emerging artists from around the globe while his collaborations with other artists result in i-Phone covers, t-shirts, and even a restaurant initiative. All of these enterprises aid in the dissemination of information, from a 'Brexit Sucks!' t-shirt campaign to publications such as his Anthony Lister – Adventure Painter! book co-authored with Roger Gatsman, his 2016 design project, Are We There Yet? A Day Trip to Banksy's Dismaland and Other Stories done in collaboration with Barry Cawston and Kath Cockshaw, and Bue the Warrior Book, an artist book to which he contributed a section of text. Manco's diverse interests and incredible knowledge of artists from all countries and backgrounds and in a variety of media makes him a significant force in promoting street art. Able to relate to his audience from an artist

perspective, a design perspective, and an academic perspective, he understands and reaches all levels of people. Cedar Lewisohn, an artist, writer, and curator himself, is another figure on street art that has brought art to the people. In a cutting-edge show held at Tate Britain in 2008, "Street Art" brought together six internationally acclaimed artists including Blu from Bologna, the artist collective Faile from New York, JR from Paris, Nunca and Os Gemeos from Sao Paulo, and Sixeart from Barcelona. Seeking to highlight street art from outside the UK, Lewisohn emphasized a connecting global thread while successfully bringing attention to a variety of international artists lesser known in the UK at that time. In relation to this exhibition, Lewisohn noted that "like graffiti, [we] identify a stencil or a poster immediately as urban but unlike graffiti, it's part of a collaborative social process rather than an adolescent marking of territory," and as such, most of the artists chosen for the Tate show were reminiscent of such collaboration.¹ A social collaborative process,

a worldwide experience, this is an art that is not solely meant to be seen but meant to be listened to, debated about, spoken about, to incite larger conversations.

A result of these collaborations, from both an artistic and scholarly standpoint, is an exceptionally democratic, de-centralized art form available to those of all classes, all backgrounds, and all walks of life. A unified, refreshing feeling saturates artwork that welcomes anyone into the conversation, inviting its viewers to partake in the action, to paint over it, re-design it, re-interpret it, engage, interact, and discuss with it. This is precisely why the street art boom has been so widely felt, and only increased in the past decade. An interactive art that encourages people to disagree, to converse, and debate, is one that everybody can enjoy. The barriers of high and low art are disappearing, replaced instead by an inclusive art that questions the very existence of those barriers in the first place.

1. Street art: it's certainly 'street', but is it 'art'?, <https://www.theguardian.com/nissanstreetart/story/0,,2283675,00.html>

INDOOR, OUTDOOR, AND THE IN-BETWEEN: STREET ART AND THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ARTISTIC PERIOD

2018/11/14

Baylee Mckeel



Popularity and obsession with street art has been climbing for over a decade, but with increased acclaim and marketability comes an inevitable shift. As an art style gains popularity, artists begin to experiment within that style and a natural variation occurs. Eventually, a new style is born and thus is the natural swing of the art historical pendulum. This raises the question, however, is the period of Street Art over?

In a 2016 article entitled "Street Art Is a Period. Period. Or the Emergence of Intermural Art" Dr. Rafael Schacter, an anthropologist and curator based at University College London, argues that we are indeed in a new artistic period. Schacter states that the current state of Street Art "is a period in a categorically ambiguous position..." and discusses what he terms the new era of Intermural Art. The selection of such a term does not come lightly for Schacter, who notes Intermural as meaning "Art in between walls. Not art inside the walls (intramural), nor outside them (extramural), but art between these same walls."¹ There is, therefore, a significant importance placed on the dialogue and relationship of inside and out and the ways that they influence one another. Intermural Art is one that "[ventures] beyond and between the gaps in these previous terminologies, exploring the space in between..."² Schacter in turn defines this art by its refusal to fit boundaries, a poetically accurate description. Defiance has been central in graffiti and Street Art since the beginning and it continues to thread through the Intermural as artists defy categorization itself. By definition, Street Art is done on the street, yet many artists now work on canvas, through installations, murals, t-shirts, skateboards, sketchbooks, graphics, Instagram, and much more. They are working independently and collaborating with one another, illegally active on the streets while also present in galleries, museums, and auction houses.

1. Rafael Schacter, Street Art Is a Period. Period. Or the Emergence of Intermural Art, July 16, 2016. <https://hyperallergic.com/310616/street-art-is-a-period-period-or-the-emergence-of-intermural-art/>

2. Ibid.



They are conveying relevant political commentary and conveying nothing at all. They are there for pleasure, for a quick photograph, and for deep introspection; sometimes they are all of these and none of these at the same time. There are artists who work between one or more, stretching the boundaries of Street Art as they experiment with other media, techniques, canvases and settings. They are a new breed of Street Artist and as such they make us question what Street Art really is. These avant-garde artists have pushed the limits so far that they now inhabit a different territory all together.¹

This territory can be confusing, especially as we encounter varied artistic styles that all seem to fall under the Street Art umbrella. Scholars such as Javier Abarca have been working to identify the differences in this practice in articles such as “From street art to murals: what have we lost?” The title itself suggests that the two are not one in the same but demand individual recognition. Abarca believes, just as Schacter does, that Street Art is one that works within its surroundings and acts in dialogue instead of in dissonance. Abarca definitively says, “The street is not a blank canvas.”² This very sentence summarizes a key point in the confusion between mural art and Street Art. The blank wall of a mural is often viewed as a bare space ready for a new work of art while the

street is an existing system of structures and forms, each with an established meaning and relationship to the people who have come into contact with them on a daily basis. Abarca diligently notes that, “in a properly made street art piece these forms and meanings are not the backdrop, they are the working material.”³ Street Art, therefore, is not only the result of what the artist has created but what already existed in the first place. It is symbiotic and not dominating. It is art for the people, one that encourages everyday passersby to interact with it. This is a large difference between Street Art and murals. Murals are often the product of corporate or institutional sponsorship, since they require heavy machinery and large, open spaces to produce. This means that they play into the boundaries set by such organizations instead of going against them and defy the ephemeral nature of Street Art as sanctioned art works that are not meant to be altered or destroyed.⁴ Along with Abarca and Schacter, scholar Ulrich Blanché sees murals and Street Art as separate as well. When asked about his favorite street artists he responded, “actually most works labeled as Street Art are repetitive and kitschy...I prefer smaller, illegal works to murals.”⁵ In one sentence he summed up both Abarca and Schacter’s point. In saying that murals are only ‘labeled’ as Street Art, but not actually in the same category, he brings attention to the need for a new term and a new period.

Interesting enough, many online portfolios often split up wall art and Street Art, art of the inside and outside, and sometimes even include an ‘in between’ section. Brooklyn based street artist Elle differentiates her work between wall art, Street Art, and graffiti or unsanctioned works. She effectively confuses Blanché’s previous distinction, since she groups unsanctioned/illegal works separately from Street Art. Yet, she still feels the need to categorize her larger wall pieces as separate from Street Art altogether. According to her portfolio, graffiti and unsanctioned works consist largely of tags placed on billboards, rooftops, and water tanks. Her Street Art is plastered on walls, mailboxes, and replaces bus ads. It does, however, conform to Abarca and Schacter’s definition of Street Art as one that coalesces with its environment, adding to it rather than dominating it. As a Brooklyn artist as well she is local and satisfies Abarca’s need for an intimate relationship between street artists and setting – in New York at least.

However, her walls category contains mural-esque artworks done both inside and outside, for festivals, commissioned by the Urban Arts Fund or Australian Immigration Office. The fact the Elle defines herself as a street artist but that her portfolio contains works outside of that realm speak to the confusion of the boundaries of this art in contemporary society. She is an artist working between the walls, in the gaps of Street Art, graffiti, and mural art and she is not the only one. The two-man collective CYRCLE are quite literally working within these same walls. Their website has the unique distinction between Indoor, Outdoor, and In between art, a perfect symbol of Intermural Art. Their Indoor art is largely gallery and installation based artworks while their Outdoor work consists of mainly giant-scale, mural-sized works. Their In between category, however, operates within and without, taking an outdoor mural inside and twisting conceptions of Street Art. One work utilizes a performer and focuses on poses and clothing, emphasizing the idea of Street Art as performative while ironically placing it indoors and centralizing the performance around fashion – a capitalist symbol. Others are done in office spaces, hotels, TV studios, and restaurants, bringing the mural art of the outside in and further complicating the definition of Street Art.

The distinction and categorization of periods or artistic styles is not to place one above another or to attempt to pigeonhole or constrict artists. It is simply to acknowledge that one type is different from another, and that a different approach is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of each art form. In understanding Street Art as a period we are allowed to step back and consider the smaller, illegal works in a different light than the larger murals, and the institutionally sponsored wall paintings, and to appreciate them all individually. Of course, there are always those who will defy categorization, but working within the gaps they are inherently Intermural artists as those “occupying the spaces in between in disruptive, innovative, boundary shifting ways.”⁶ It is truly exciting to see where such a freedom will lead and to experience the next phase in Street Art Now.

1. Ibid.

2. Javier Abarca, From street art to murals: what have we lost?. http://www.urbancreativity.org/uploads/1/0/7/2/10727553/javier_sauc_vol2_n2_r3.pdf

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Meeting Point – Ulrich Blanché, April 29, 2017. <http://www.isupportstreetart.com/meeting-point-ulrich-blanche/>

6. Rafael Schacter, Street Art Is a Period. Period. Or the Emergence of Intermural Art, July 16, 2016. <https://hyperallergic.com/310616/street-art-is-a-period-period-or-the-emergence-of-intermural-art/>

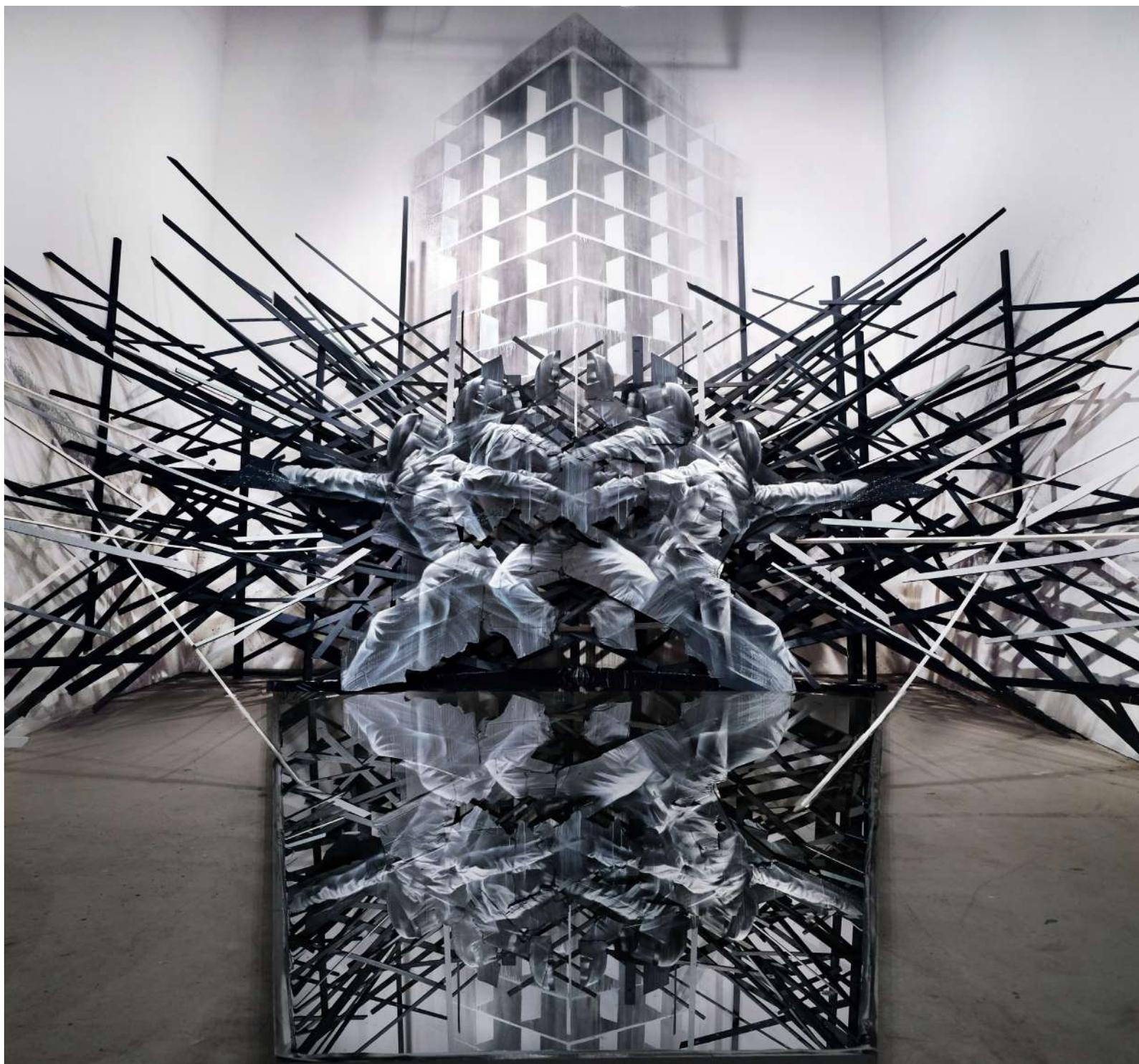
ARTIST'S PORTFOLIOS

34 - 43

AARON LI-HILL

AARON LI-HILL

Electric Currents And Mortal Wounds Installation
White Walls Gallery, San Francisco, USA
Aerosol, Acrylic, Wood, Cardboard, Plastic + Water
2014



Aaron Li-Hill is a Canadian visual artist based in Brooklyn, who employs painting, illustration, stenciling, and sculptural elements within his works. With a background in graffiti and mural painting and a degree in Fine Arts, his works range from smaller multiples to enormous murals that explore industrialization, scientific breakthrough, man versus nature and information saturation. Li-Hill possesses a BFA from OCADU and has worked and shown in cities such as Melbourne, New York, San Francisco, LA, Berlin and Hong Kong. He has also had works displayed in major institutions such as the National Gallery of Victoria, The Art Gallery of Ontario, the Portsmouth Museum of Art in New Hampshire and the Honolulu Museum of Art.

Aaron Li-Hill's work attempts to decipher the complexities of the rapid development in our modern age. Through the western gaze Li-Hill points to the devastating effects of capitalist culture on the individual psyche, his work serves as a template for the ramifications felt on a global scale. The work mirrors the perception of the westerner attempting to comprehend, disentangle and redress. Born out of suppression, it becomes a manifestation portraying the skewed image of the imprint our culture has globally. To create these complex images, Li-Hill blurs the lines between graffiti, graphic design, painting and drawing to disrupt the concepts of what is considered high and lowbrow art. Through the storm of imagery and density there is also a beauty that surfaces from this fragile balance.



The Impact of Discovery
Kiev, Ukraine
Aerosol and Latex on Concrete
2016



Painted on the Cultural Center of Ukraine's largest science and technical school, (Kiev Polytechnical Institute) this piece speaks to influential discoveries of our modern world. The explosive backdrop is derived from the Boson Higgs experiments, where two Hydrogen protons collide together at the speed of light. Overlaid, the mirrored image of the man running becomes an embodiment of the hydrogen protons

hurtled toward each other and of the impact that these discoveries have on the world around us and the world within us. Buried in this design is a subterranean meaning influenced by the current situation in Ukraine. These conflicts breed discoveries that, through struggle, enable culture, identity and community to be forged.



Industrial Cascade
Art Gallery of Ontario,
Wood, Acrylic, Aerosol, Paper, Styrene + Aluminum Composite
2013



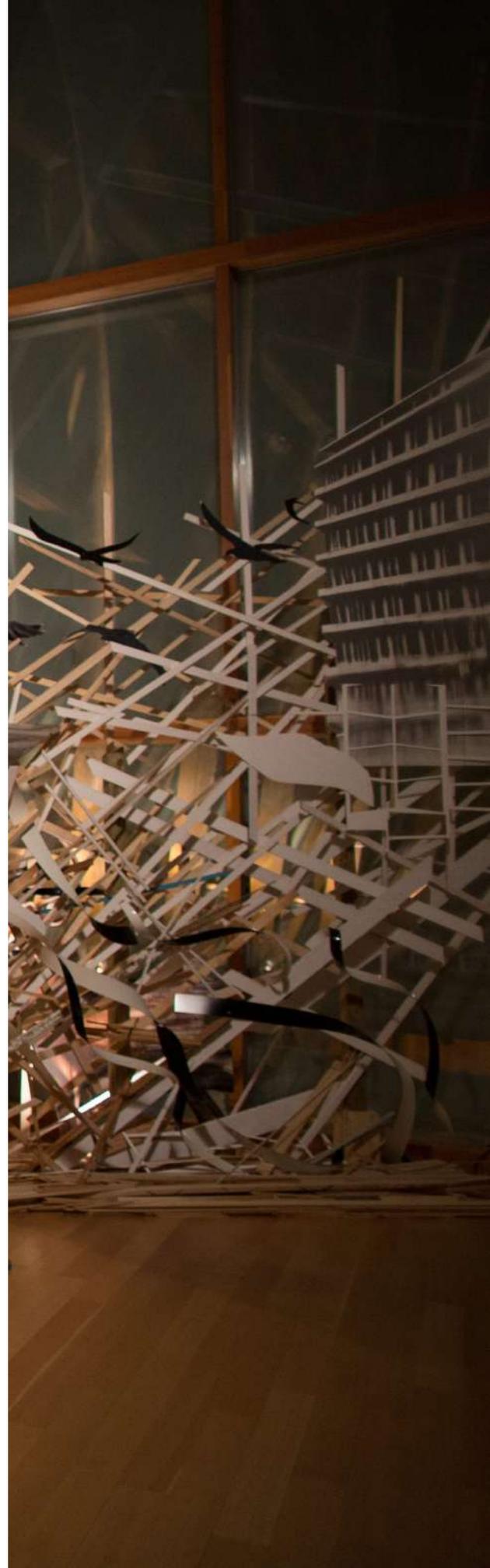
Industrial Cascade

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada
Wood, Acrylic, Aerosol, Paper and Styrene Approx.
45x20'
2013

This piece, the first of a hybrid approach, conjoins the image based mural work from the street with the abstract geometric wooden installations.

Embodying many of the complexities expressed in this piece are fencers. An allusion to the capitalist culture we are in, locked into a constant struggle of competition that is amplified by our society. The Fencers also draw up an association with the Olympics, a wholly western idea that has caught on global appeal and introduced a different form of competition to other nations. Although seemingly small and insignificant compared to the scale of this piece, the fencer's shoes become powerful symbols of the different companies involved in the event. As well as having one nation versus another in this image, we can see the corporate influence that shadows the games and serves as a subtle reminder of the unequal playing field rooted in existing global hierarchies. Athletes spend their lives perfecting their practice, but how this energy is used and co-opted creates a corporate industry surrounding the sport. This industry has profound psychological, social and environmental effects.

Another facet of this piece that ties many of my ideas together is the use of multiple-exposure photography, relating to Eadweard Muybridge's galloping horse image where, in 1878 he proved, through still photographs, that a horse at mid gallop has all four feet off the ground. Until this moment people did not believe this. Through this installation, I am attempting to highlight the intricate historical relationship between capitalist industrialization, scientific establishment and cultural production.





Rise and Fall
 Berlin, Germany
 Aerosol and Latex on Concrete
 2015

Created on the facade of the Street Art museum, Urban Nation, this piece pulled from two source points specific to the site of Berlin. The first being a famous statue in the heart of the city, of the greek goddess of Victory (Siegessäule/ The Victory Column) and the film Wings of Desire by Wim Wenders, where an angel becomes human to experience the world. As well as speaking to the spirit of renewal

and reinvention, this piece at its core is based on the fragile and unsustainable concept of constant progress and the fallacy of victory. All empires are bound to fall but something new is always born from it.

Guns, Germs and Steel
Installation View



Planes Of Engagement
New Jersey, USA
Aerosol + Latex on Concrete
2014



Apparition Of The Past
NYC
Aerosol + Latex on Concrete
2017



Rebecca Solnit's : River of Shadows

“Before, (Photography) every face, every place, every event, had been unique, seen only once and then lost forever among the changes of age, light, time. The past existed only in memory and interpretation, and the world beyond one’s own experience was mostly stories.”

“Annihilating time and space” is what most new technologies aspire to do: technology regards the very terms of our bodily existence as burdensome. Annihilating time and space most directly means accelerating communications and transportation. The domestication of the horse and the invention of the wheel sped up the rate and volume of transit; the invention of writing made it possible for stories to reach farther across time and space than their tellers and stay more stable than memory; and new communications, reproduction, and transportation technologies only continue the process. What distinguishes a technological world is that the terms of nature are obscured; one need not live quite in the present or the local.

-Excerpts from River of Shadows by Rebecca Solnit taken from The Annihilation of Space and Time: Rebecca Solnit on How Muybridge Froze the Flow of Existence, Shaped Visual Culture, and Changed Our Consciousness on Brain Pickings

Crumbling As We Climb
Long Beach
Aerosol + Latex on Concrete
2016



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