

Street arts: arguments on it as a form of expression



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Street Art, A Form of Expression

Art is defined in the dictionary as the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power. Creating art seems to become an issue when the word “street” is added in front of it. In my modest opinion, street art should be continued and expressed for it is a way that someone shows their ideas and creativity. Individuals believe street art should be banned and consider it as vandalism. In addition, civilians say that street art is trashy and makes their communities look uninviting. On the other hand, some argue that street art is expressive. Activists, regarding matters beyond measure, even say that street art is a form of commentary on societal issues. The list goes on. The issue that arises most, is that street art is simply just vandalism. Street art is created mostly on side-walks, buildings, and tunnels. Not all street art is done by painting. Methods such as yarn bombing are used, which involves covering surfaces in knitted patterns. It can also be expressed through stickers and stencils to make a statement. Street art is usually shown in urban areas, and yes, it falls within the lines of graffiti to an extent. This type of art usually is created with the intent of conveying a message. The intent of one’s act is the distinguishing factor regarding graffiti vs. street art. Both acts are a form of expression that aren’t always done with permission. This is where the issue of vandalism comes into play. Graffiti is usually done with the intent of giving a message to an individual or specific group; no intent of public understanding. Whereas, street art provokes discussion and calls for a reaction.

An issue proposed, is that graffiti and street art are the same thing, however, that topic is debatable. From my perspective, graffiti is the rebellious and care-free act of expression, usually done with the intent of little to nothing. In addition, artist who perform graffiti, have no consideration of property or the law. Street art is a form of creative expression with the intent of portraying one's feelings or perspective on matters they feel are important to share. The legality of the two seems farfetched, since some cannot determine the differences between street art and graffiti. In this light, I can understand the concern and problems that may arise. For example, when does art become too expressive or even out of hand? Who determines what is significant enough to be "acceptable", by means of street art. However, who are we to determine what is important to someone or not? What exact harm is being done? As more questions emerge, I believe that it is an issue of respect and acceptance. Art is made to project and express feelings. It is a form of therapy, communication, and even an act of connecting with people. The point of street art is not to diminish or destroy buildings and the community, but to make it a community where voices and points can be made without regulation or fear. Also, most street art is not made to take away from the already, "beautiful building". Artists aren't doing their works to take away from the picture, but to enhance and promote ways of change; in a positive way. Some things are too vast and wonderful to confine!

Contrary to my beliefs, Heather MacDonald, a contributing editor of *City Journal*, says street art is vandalism. MacDonald stated that "Graffiti is something that one celebrates, if one is juvenile enough to do so, when it shows up on someone else's property but never on one's own ("Graffiti Is

Vandalism"). To my understanding, I do not believe that McDonald is an open minded individual when it comes to the realm of art. I make these assumptions based off multiple reasons. The editor makes several comments on the invasion of privacy. " If your home were tagged during the night without your consent, would you welcome the new addition to your décor or would you immediately call a painter, if not the police" (MacDonald). She explains that graffiti and street art isn't art at all. Although I can understand her point regarding one's personal property, it seems like she has no understanding of self-expression. Artists are not going to individuals houses involuntarily, especially with a goal to harm. Most artists do think about the place in which they are using. MacDonald focuses more on the negative aspects of street art, and not the true meaning of what it is. The argument proposed is that graffiti is not artistically compelling and that it is a crime. In Heather Macdonald's perspective, she sees street art, graffiti, and tagging as the same. Tagging is the practice of ownership by writing your name or a group on surfaces. Again, street art does not aim at ownership, but more so creating a message. Although this is one's property, there are laws that protect the performance of street art.

The Copyright Act is a law that gives artists the rights to their expression, " criminal acts", AND freedom of choice. The law imposes, "... the sole right to produce or reproduce the work or any substantial part thereof in any material form, to perform the work or any substantial part thereof in public, or if the work is unpublished, to publish the work or any substantial part thereof..." The Copyright Act also states, " to produce, reproduce, perform or publish any translation of the work; to reproduce, adapt and publicly

present the works a cinematographic work; to communicate the work to the public by telecommunication, to present at a public exhibition, for a purpose other than sale or hire." This means, regarding street art, that it is legal to display, produce, and commercialize these works. Regardless if the work is anonymous or not, the work lies in the hands of the creator. Although there are rights that protect property, The Copyright Act still protects these artists. As mentioned before, street artists do not create their works with the intention of vandalism. Most artists consider where they are creating their masterpieces; the placement of art contributes to how the art is presented.

MacDonald mentions a politician named John Lindsay, who "declared war on graffiti" in 1972. To the politicians understanding, he associated graffiti with disorder and law-breaking. The point proposed, is one criminal act being accepted implies that other criminal acts are also accepted. Some examples include stealing, assault, and drug usage. MacDonald uses Lindsay's theory to justify her own, by pulling unrelated criminal acts into the picture.

Macdonald associates street art, "vandalism" in her mind, as the beginning of unlawful acts. It is almost as if MacDonald associates these criminal acts towards a specific group of people. The editor's understanding and mindset seems to be extremely minuscule, regarding street art. Instead of looking at it as forms of communication and self-expression, she associates it with criminal activity. To my understanding, MacDonald is solely focused on her own self and her property, as if artists will specifically choose her as a subject. MacDonald looks at vandalism, street art, and graffiti as one, and believes it is a juvenile act. This means MacDonald sees anyone who practices the art, as an adolescent and childish. In conclusion, we can see

that Macdonald lacks understanding of what street art is and why it is practiced.

Although there are individuals strongly against street art, there are still people who are highly supportive of this medium. Urban art specialist, Mary McCarthy, believes that street art is a tool for change. McCarthy states that street art speaks as a form of spiritual survival and starts at a place of rebellion. “ It was often the only tool of the poverty stricken, the disenfranchised, to communicate their stories, their sense of place” (“ Street Art as A Tool for Change”), says McCarthy. The Urban specialist explains that when you have little to nothing, being able to “ claim” something as yours, gives you ownership of your community, or place. Street art is a mark of identity and serves as a medium for the future. McCarthy believes that the Street Art Movement has gone beyond all art movements to date. “ Stylistically, politically, and socially it has inspired, challenged and changed people’s lives positively across the world” (“ Street Art as A Tool for Change”), implies McCarthy. She notes that artists are now using their environments as canvases, and that street artists create their works “ from walls to railings, from wood to metal, from buildings to vehicles”. McCarthy describes this act as unprecedented. Like other supporters of street art, she agrees that it has a political affect. With the streets as a medium, individuals can express their opinions and broadcast their voice. In agreeance with McCarthy, this type of communication has an influence on rhetoric and opinion; throughout the community to the people. The Urban specialist uses many examples to show how influential street art can be. One example

given, is Shepherd Fairey's " Hope" image, that was reproduced across the world by pro Obama supporters.

When the voices of individuals are expressed through street art, places across the globe transform. Mary McCarthy does a wonderful job at capturing the true purpose of street art; influencing change and making a statement. The activist takes Miami for an example. The Goldman family, from a dangerous part in the city, changed their community greatly. McCarthy explains that the Goldman's " good hearted" (Street Art as A Tool for Change") program, encouraging street art, has been transformed. As a result, the once dangerous area, is now an " international tourist attraction and affluent neighborhood in its own right". Finally, another influential example of street art is JR's artwork in the favelas. Mrs. McCarthy sees this as an " encouraging sense of pride" within disenfranchised residents of Rio. Mary McCarthy not only appreciates the art, but clearly has done her research.

Many people may think that not everyone can relate or understand street art, so it proposes the question; what is the point? McCarthy put into words, " One of the main reasons why this art has been so accessible and popular is the artist's ability to relate to the here and now- to live in the moment and to express a personal, a social and a political rhetoric "(" Street Art as A Tool for Change"). Pursuant to her belief, this is a rhetoric that can be understood and relates to all. The streets give an artist a canvas that all can see. An example given, is Banksy's Mobile Lovers. McCarthy explains that Mobile Lovers had a double impact on the community; where it took place and the message. The artist of this work points out that modern technology distracts <https://assignbuster.com/street-arts-arguments-on-it-as-a-form-of-expression/>

us from our company. Banksy's artwork was done in a dark doorway at the end of a dead-end street. McCarthy emphasizes the usage of glow-in-the-dark spray paint, which she claims, " added weight to the idea that this piece is intended to be only ' half seen'" (" Street Art as A Tool for Change"). The artwork was done behind a club in Bristol. In later findings, I was shocked McCarthy knew Banksy. She was responsible for the sale of *Mobile Lovers*, with permission, that had a powerful impact in Bristol. *Broad Plain*, a Rugby Football Club, purchased Banksy's artwork and its proceedings went to the club where the art was located. Banksy spent most of his time in this club and was ecstatic when he found out that his artwork helped it from foreclosing! McCarthy concludes that this is a prime example of how street can affect many people in various ways.

Street art is a form of expression and communication across the world that has both negative and positive effects. It is becoming more popular in our modern-day society and is becoming a voice regarding political, social, and personal issues. Street art has the power to change society, people, and even the energy within places. Although some opinion may differ, through street art, we are all heard!

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