

**RECOGNISABLE,
REPRODUCIBLE.**



a graffiti manifesto

ReCOGNISABLE +

In my world, design is a completely unpretentious artform, one where theorists such as John Berger, Bruno Munari, and Guy Debord have just as much to say as small-town graffiti writers - guerrilla urban decorators, taking the revolution against tired local councils and 'forward-thinking' corporations to the street where it belongs.



Fig. 1: The folk art of 'Eiffe der Bär'

I fell in love with design as the most omnipresent, unpretentious, and practical artform, one which simultaneously encourages originality and reproducibility. This dialectic, at the core of engaging design, is the lifeblood of tagging.

Graff, in stark opposition to 'street art', is the ultimate liberalisation and democratisation of art - not only removing the gallery setting or the ability to be bought or sold, but also the division between artist and audience - in fact, the complete abolition of these roles altogether. The street-walker has the complete freedom to create or destroy a tag (humiliating a 'toy' in the process), provided they have the guts to break the law. Graffiti cannot be done for fame and glory, only infamy, an adrenaline rush, and a criminal record. The graffiti writer has to rid themselves of any ego other than their name for the sake of survival.



Reproducible.

On the other hand, the 'street art' of Banksy, for example, is the gallerisation, the privatisation of the public space - a glass panel is placed over the carefully preserved piece, removing the freedom to create and destroy, furthering the artist-audience boundary, and solidifying the cult of personality. Every wall Banksy paints is a legal, because every wall Banksy paints ceases to be a wall - turning into a gallery, population of one, a monument to himself, a pilgrimage site for devotees, and worst of all, a photo opportunity. Banksy uses mystery and anonymity to create an identity rather than to hide one - much like an extravagant superhero costume, a mode of 'hiding' that merely draws attention to you. The graffiti writer is a folk hero: morally ambiguous, known only to those who wish to know, and undeniably strange. Germany's first graffiti writer and aspiring President, Peter-Ernst Eiffe, died escaping a mental institution after being arrested for driving his car, decorated with 'magic triangles' (Mao, Rockefeller, Eiffe) into Hamburg station. The street artist is a superhero, masked but undeniably Establishment, armed with empty sloganeering, tongue-in-cheek but oh-so-serious.

Banksy has colonised the streets, and the popular imagination of 'graffiti artists'. 'Artist' in contrast to 'writer' - you become an 'artist' when you cease being a criminal and are accepted into the Art World. Like all counter- and subculture, graffiti must be subsumed into monoculture, into hegemony, neatly commodified and placed behind glass - to be placidly observed or mass-produced and sold in any form possible, ironically amplified by some kind of limp 'statement'.

The mural is another interesting example of 'street art' - either a powerful expression of community and meaning, such as in the occupied Six Counties of Ireland, or a commissioned display designed to bring 'vibrance' and 'character' in a strictly-defined way to a freshly buffed wall in Shoreditch. They want art *for* the people, but definitely not *of* the people - they want control, they want to dictate to those below them. Capital's Eternal presence - in the world, but not of the world. I'm not arguing for complete graffiti hegemony, rather an autonomous street culture. It matters not if the cage is designed to fit the bird, or the bird the cage. The end result is the same - the objective here is total, self-defined freedom.



Fig 2. An attempt at preserving a 'bold' 'political' 'art piece'
by Superman Banksy



Fig 3. An example of justice undertaken
by an anonymous agent of the righteous revolution

FIN.